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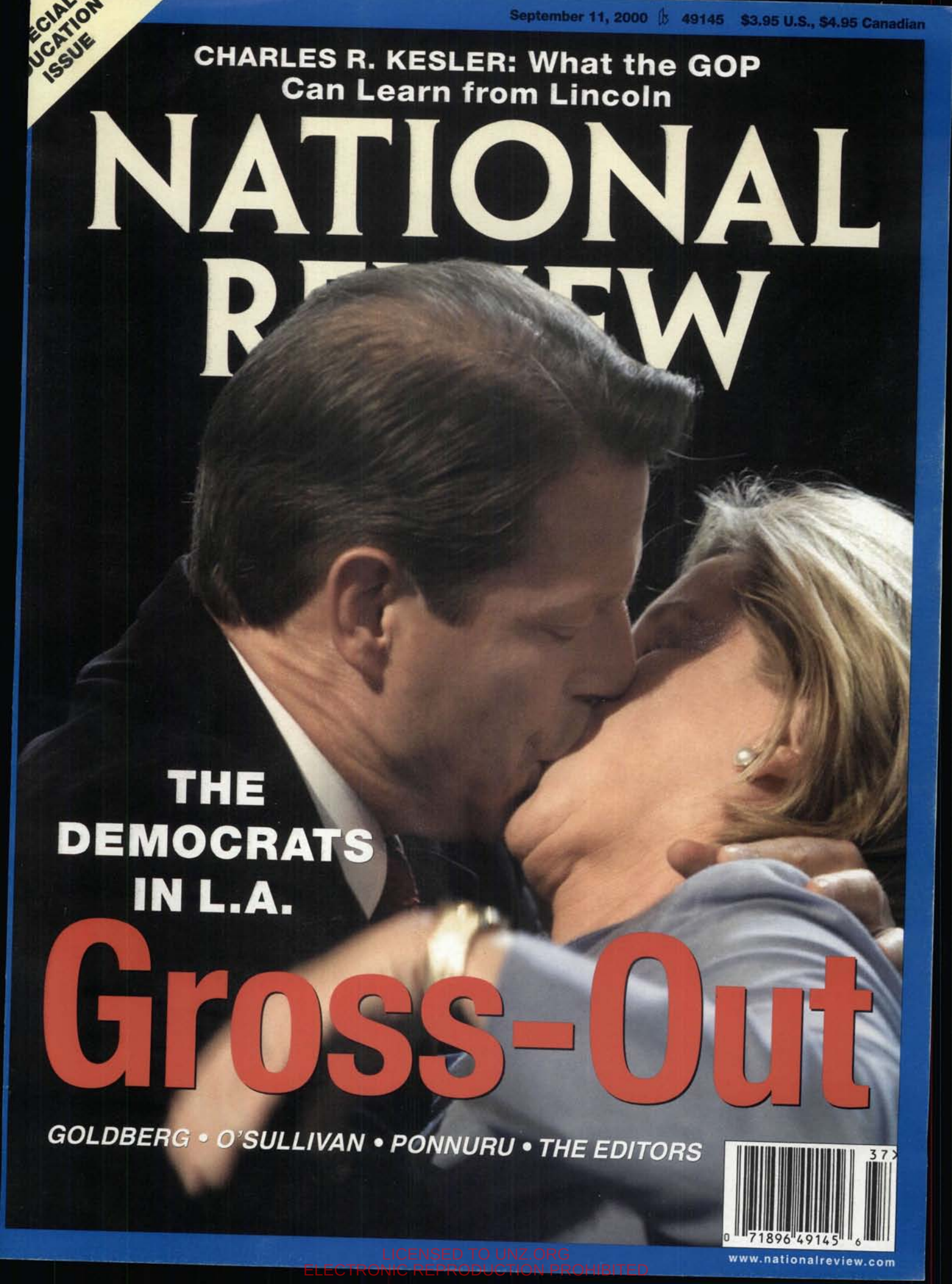
CHARLES R. KESLER: What the GOP Can Learn from Lincoln

NATIONAL REVIEW



THE DEMOCRATS IN L.A.

Gross-Out

GOLDBERG • O'SULLIVAN • PONNURU • THE EDITORS

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A world of ideas on public policy.

Prescription Drug Costs: Has Canada Found the Answer?

By William McArthur, M.D.

Some Americans faced with the rising costs of prescription drugs look longingly at Canada, where prescription drugs appear to cost less than in the United States. The fact is that, while some drugs do cost less in Canada, others don't. Furthermore, many drugs are not available at any cost in Canada. The effect of Canadian policies is to restrict the overall availability of prescription drugs through a combination of a lengthy drug approval process and oppressive price controls.

First of all, Canada's federal drug approval process takes much longer than that of the U.S., resulting in delayed access for Canadians to new drugs. For example, Canadian acceptance of the drug Viagra came a whole year after it had been available in the US. For 12 months Canadians who needed Viagra, or another of the many drugs delayed or denied approval, had to go to the US to get their medication.

Even if a drug wins federal approval, it faces 10 more hurdles to become widely accessible – the 10 provinces. Each province has a review committee that must approve the drug for reimbursement under the public healthcare system. For example, in British Columbia, neither the new anti-arthritic drugs Celebrex and Vioxx, nor the Alzheimer's treatment Aricept, have been approved for reimbursement, severely limiting their availability. Further, the provincial approval times vary greatly from province to province, creating further inequities.

Price controls imposed by a government agency, the Patented Medicines Price Review Board (PMPRB), are the reason some prescription drugs cost less in Canada than in the United States. However, while keeping some prescription drug prices down through price controls, Canada has been unable to control overall drug spending. OECD statistics reveal that when the PMPRB was created in 1988, per capita expenditure on prescription drugs was $106; by 1996 that had doubled to $211 per person. One study of international drug price comparisons by Prof. Patricia Danzon of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania concluded that, on the average, drug prices in Canada were higher than those in the United States. Some individual drugs, particularly generics, cost far more in Canada. For example, the anti-hypertensive drug atenolol is four times more expensive in Canada than in the United States. And a University of Toronto study found that the main effect of price controls on prescription drugs was to limit patients' access to newer medicines so that they had to rely more on hospitals and surgery.

All provinces require that chemically identical and cheaper generic drugs be substituted for more expensive brand-name drugs when they are available. However, British Columbia has gone farther with a "reference price system." Under this system, the government can require that a patient receiving a drug subsidy be treated with whichever costs the least: (a) a generic substitute, (b) a drug with similar but not identical active ingredients or (c) a completely different compound deemed to have the same therapeutic effect. Patients are often forced to switch medicines, sometimes in mid-treatment, when the reference price system mandates a change. Twenty-seven percent of physicians in British Columbia report that they have had to admit patients to the emergency room or hospital as a result of the mandated switching of medicines. Sixty-eight percent report confusion or uncertainty by cardiovascular or hypertension patients, and 60 percent have seen patients' conditions worsen or their symptoms accelerate due to mandated switching.

> ***Canada has succeeded only in preventing Canadians from obtaining drugs that might have reduced hospital stays and expensive medical procedures***

Through limiting the availability of prescription drugs and controlling the prices of those that are available, Canada has succeeded only in preventing Canadians from obtaining drugs that might have reduced hospital stays and expensive medical procedures. The end result of this is that Canadians are getting a lower standard of health care at a higher cost than patients and taxpayers have a right to expect.

One lesson that Americans should learn from the Canadian experience is that when government pays for drugs, government controls the supply. As soon as government has to pay the bill, efforts are made to restrict the availability of newer and more effective drugs. The inevitable result is that other health expenditures like surgery and emergency visits increase, and patients suffer.

Dr. William McArthur is a palliative care physician, writer and health policy analyst in Vancouver, B.C. This article is excerpted from an analysis prepared for the National Center for Policy Analysis, a market-oriented think tank based in Dallas, Texas (www.ncpa.org).

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■ LETTERS ■

RIGHT IDEAS

Ramesh Ponnuru is to be commended for distinguishing between American political ideology and American national culture in his critique of the well-meaning but poorly thought out political messianism of Sen. John McCain ("Hauntings, Visions," Aug. 28). Those who claim that "America is based on an idea" fail to distinguish among political philosophy, religion, and national culture. Political philosophy answers the question, "How should we be governed?" The question "How should we live?" can be answered only by one or another religion (a category that includes secular religions like secular humanism and Confucianism). "Who are we?" is a question that can be answered only by reference to national culture (something that can be shared by people of diverse ancestry).

American politics is indeed based on an idea, the idea of liberal democracy; American national identity, though, is based on a fact—the existence through time of a unique American cultural nation, which is perpetuated by means of the acculturation of native-born children and the assimilation of immigrants. What T. S. Eliot said of the effort to replace religion with art applies with equal force to the attempt to preserve national identity solely on the basis of political ideology when a common culture has disappeared: It is like hoping that the wallpaper will continue to stand when the walls have crumbled.

Michael Lind
Washington, D.C.

PASSING AND GROWING

In his essay "Love on the Arno" (Aug. 14), Jay Nordlinger captures perfectly the hubris of many young Americans living abroad. I spent the years 1975–77, when I was in my mid twenties, in Madrid, and I felt intense pride at being able to "pass" as a European. As with the young woman Mr. Nordlinger describes, I disdained all things American. (One might have thought that, living in a country where, in the final days of Franco, I could have been thrown in jail for an undetermined period of time for merely picking up a political flyer off the ground and reading it, I would have appreciated my homeland a bit more.) Eventually, though, the joke was on me (as it perhaps was on the young woman Mr. Nordlinger met on the train to Florence). One day, when strolling through the Puerta del Sol, I spied a group of somewhat inebriated businessmen, obviously American. "How crass!" I sniffed. "How bourgeois! How . . . American!" Imagine my chagrin when, quickly passing them on the sidewalk, I heard them speaking . . . German.

Erica Larson Sartain
Dallas, Tex.

THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS

NATIONAL REVIEW described the Branch Davidians as an "apocalyptic offshoot of Jehovah's Witnesses" ("The Week," Aug. 14). Actually, *The Handbook of Denominations in the United States* refers to the Davidians as "A subset of one offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventist Movement." The reference goes on to state that "It was never part of the large church that goes by that name." By this standard, the Church of England could be defined as an "offshoot" of the Roman Catholic Church.

W. F. Pitcher
New York, N.Y.

PLEASANT PENANCE

On August 19, I happened upon Mr. Buckley at Boston's Logan Airport. I nervously asked him if he was "Mr. Bennett." With a polite twinkle and a grin, he simply said, "No, sorry." After feeling like the reigning king of all dimwits, I mustered up the courage to apologize and ask for his autograph. Tonight I have researched all of his books and many of his articles.

I also just read Rob Long's article, "The Problem with Al" in the August 14 issue of NATIONAL REVIEW and have cried tears of laughter. This is the best entertainment I have had since I stayed up all night laughing with college roommates. I'm ordering a subscription for everyone I know. I have finally found a publication that encourages me to say, "At last!"

Bradford Summers
Weymouth, Mass.

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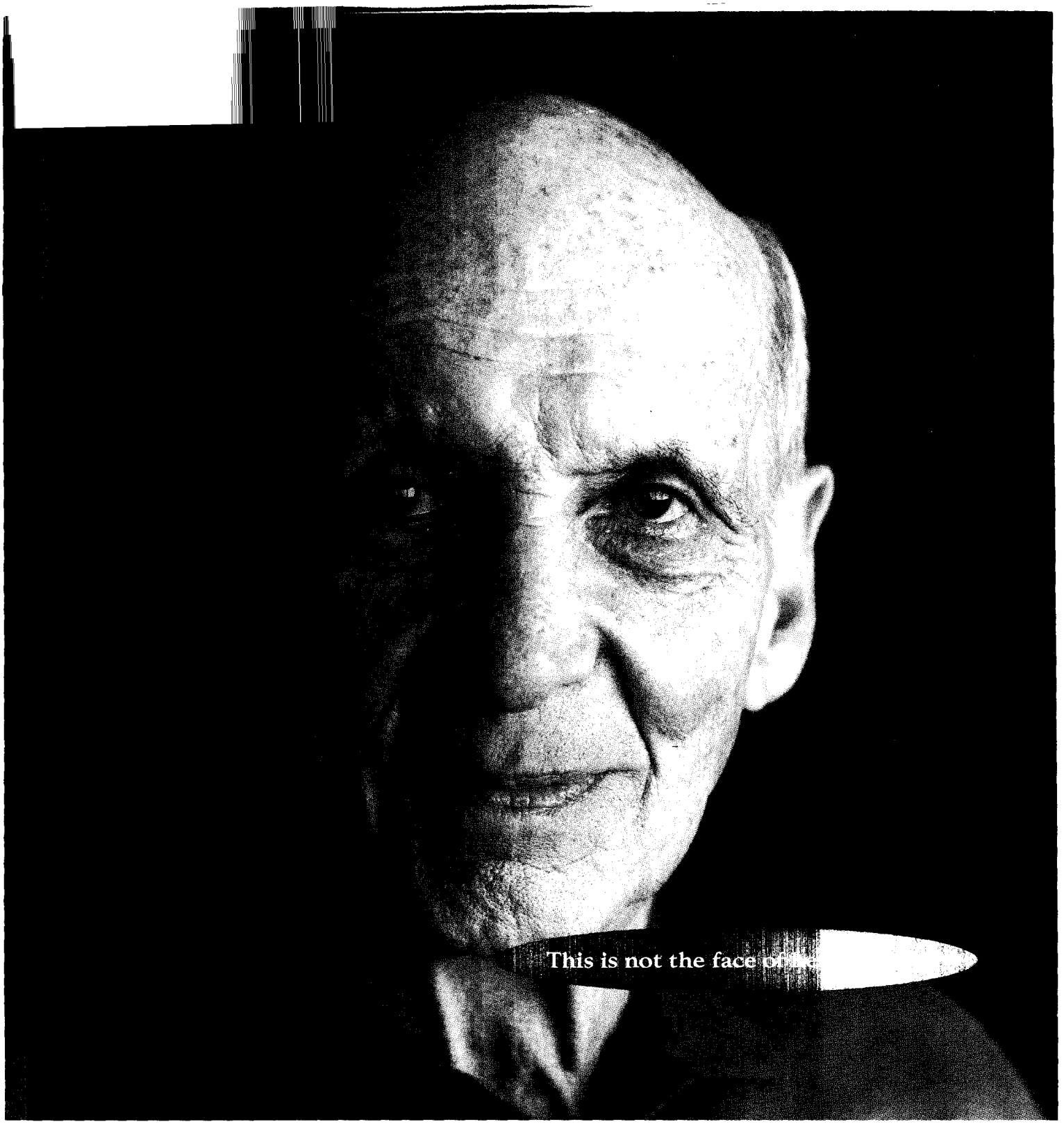

It's the face of Charles Dubin—choir singer, moviegoer and retired TV director. Four years ago, Charles had "a funny feeling in his chest." When Charles heard the words "heart disease" from his doctor, he feared losing his independence and his ability to enjoy life fully. But, thanks to effective medicines, today he's enjoying an active retirement. And, with his new healthier lifestyle, Charles is also doing his part to keep his heart in shape. Heart disease is the leading cause of death among Americans. But in the last 30 years, modern medicines have helped reduce the number of deaths by half. New medicines are also helping to keep more patients out of the hospital by controlling high-risk conditions that lead to heart disease, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Pharmaceutical company researchers are working hard to discover breakthroughs that will help make many illnesses and diseases a thing of the past and bring more patients new hope for a better tomorrow. So, more people like Charles can get on with living and go on with the show.

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■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ *The Hotline*'s electoral scoreboard shows **George W. Bush** with poll leads in 31 states worth 335 electoral votes, and Vice President **Gore** with advantage in 10 states worth 153 electoral votes (270 needed to win), but some post–Democratic-convention polls have Gore bouncing ahead. . . . Gore: "I will not say a single unkind word about Governor Bush or **Dick Cheney**. I will not have a single negative personal attack on either one of them." . . . **Jimmy Carter**, on whether he agrees with Gore that President **Clinton** is one of the greatest presidents, on ABCNews.com: "Well, no. And I never have." . . . **Joseph Lieberman**, same subject, on *Meet the Press*: "You know, I'm going to leave the exact words for history." . . . Lieberman, on raising Social Security and Medicare retirement age, which Gore opposes: "We should keep it on the table for the good reason that people are living longer." . . . Convention crowd cheers Clinton mightily, but barely stirs when president praises Lieberman as "New Democrat." . . . San Francisco mayor **Willie Brown**, in *New York Times*: "The most important thing to me is that Gore is not emotionally in touch with the party's base. He will have to find ways to repair that."

■ Clinton: "By the way, Mr. Gore did sponsor the legislation" that led to creating the Internet. . . . Clinton, on how impeachment made him a better man: "If I hadn't been knocked down . . . I might not ever have had to really deal with [the crisis in my personal life] 100 percent." . . . On first night of Democratic convention, president and **Hillary Clinton** watch stage from separate skyboxes. . . . Clinton, on public policy: "I am quite sure that some of my positions are wrong." . . . Clinton, at fundraiser for Sen. **Chuck Robb** (D., Va.): "I do not believe there is a braver person in public life today than Chuck Robb." . . . At another fundraiser, Clinton refers to his presidency as an "affair of the heart." . . . Word "adultery" flashes across C-SPAN's closed captioning during early-morning replay of Clinton's convention address, and executives suspect sabotage. . . . Some White House employees continue to download pornography from Internet, despite reprimands last year, reports *Washington Post*. . . . Aircraft travel for Clinton's trips cost $247 million since 1997, says General Accounting Office.

■ **Roger Cardinal Mahony**, delivering invocation at Democratic convention, prays that God "will keep us ever committed to protect the life and well-being of all people, but especially unborn children, the sick, and the elderly." . . . Sen. **Evan Bayh** (Ind.) is "leading candidate" to succeed Lieberman as head of New Democrats, says *Roll Call*. . . . Thinking about 2004? Sen. **John Edwards** (N.C.) and Sen. **John Kerry** (Mass.) speak to

"When I count my blessings, should it be before or after taxes?"

Iowa delegates in Los Angeles. . . . In convention speech, **Jesse Jackson** claims GOP convention never mentioned the words "AIDS" or "Africa." Republicans correct the record, noting one speech was devoted entirely to AIDS and prime-time speaker **Condoleezza Rice** spoke about Africa. . . . **Robert Borosage** of liberal Campaign for America's Future, on Gore-Lieberman, in *New York Times*: "If this ticket goes down, I think progressives are going to be pretty determined to have a horse in the field next time around." . . . Rep. **Ken Lucas** (D., Ky.) says he's not sure who he's voting for in November. . . . Sen. **Ted Kennedy** (D., Mass.), who was expelled from Harvard for having another student take Spanish exam for him, sings mariachi song for California delegation.

■ Senior citizen winds up in hospital after ingesting prescription drug bought in Canada on bus trip organized by Democratic-Farmer-Labor party senatorial candidate **Mark Dayton** (Minn.), reports Associated Press. "I've never had any trouble [with my drugs] until now," says 83-year-old **Stanley Kampa**. . . . AFL-CIO political director **Steve Rosenthal**, in *Washington Post*: "If you do the math race by race, it's difficult to see the Democrats winning the majority. But, no matter what, it's very close." . . . GOP candidate **Gloria Matta Tuchman** hopes to unseat Rep. **Loretta Sanchez** (D., Calif.) by taking advantage of Playboy Mansion fundraiser controversy. . . . Reform party candidate **Pat Buchanan** picks **Ezola Foster**—African-American woman, Proposition 187 activist, and John Birch Society member—as running mate. . . . Old Executive Office Building, next to White House, officially renamed Eisenhower Old Executive Office Building. . . . *New York Post* reports HUD secretary **Andrew Cuomo** is "definitely" running for governor of New York in 2002. . . . After much protest, "Choose Life" license plates go on sale in Florida. . . . Chicago public schools let group distribute book covers featuring Ten Commandments, but only off school property.

■ U.S. jets bomb defense sites in Iraq following missile attacks. . . . North Korean leader **Kim Jong Il** confirms he has sold missiles to Iran and Syria. . . . United Kingdom's chief medical officer **Liam Donaldson** calls for expansion of human-embryo cloning. . . . Half of Britain's pregnant teens had prescriptions for birth-control pill when impregnated . . . . More than 2 million attend Catholic youth festival in Rome. . . . Suicides hit record levels in Japan. . . . Taliban militia ruling Afghanistan refuses to extradite terrorist **Osama bin Laden**. . . . Mexican president-elect **Vicente Fox Quesada** promises to appoint border czar.

■ At Sony Studios event before convention, organizers inadvertently position Clinton to stand before large movie billboard. The movie? *Hollow Man*. **NR**

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THE WEEK

■ Say, did you hear Joe Lieberman is Jewish?

■ Some of our readers may have found the speeches in Los Angeles confusing. So here is a glossary that may be helpful: **Choice**—something very, very important to protect. Although working families should never have to choose *between* things. **Fiscal discipline**—high taxes. **Gun safety**—common sense; opposed by powerful interests. **Popularity contest**—the presidential race shouldn't be one. **Powerful interests**—companies that do not win popularity contests; Republicans. Not to be confused with professionals. **Professionals**—What teachers should be paid like, while keeping the job security of bureaucrats. **Tax cuts**—a government program that benefits the wealthy. **The wealthy**—people who benefit from tax cuts; Republicans. **Working families**—Democratic voters. Any questions?

■ Traditionally, American political performances were modeled on the sermon, from Jonathan Edwards to the revivalist's call-and-response; and on the legislative oration, from Pitt and Burke, via Patrick Henry, Webster, and Clay. The new state of the art is the walk to the podium. The Bill Clinton/Harry Thomason stunt in Los Angeles recalled nothing so much as the triumphal last scene of *Star Wars*. But that scene was itself influenced by Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. For two decades the style of the presidency and political conventions has increasingly borrowed from the fascist rally and the rock concert (to the extent they can be distinguished). The spectacles that Mike Deaver staged for Ronald Reagan cannot escape this indictment. The trend emphasizes choreography over bustle; imagery over word; and the leader as symbolic figure, not as deliverer of argument or inspiration (if President Clinton's mike had died, his podium walk would have lost nothing). We won't start shooting people in basements just because we have bad taste. But our bad taste dulls our receptiveness to the next "I have a dream," or "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

■ In 1995, Sen. Joseph Lieberman said that preferences based on race and sex were "dividing us," and that he supported California's Proposition 209, which would repeal them. Veep candidate Lieberman now tells the Congressional Black Caucus, "I have supported affirmative action; I do support affirmative action; and I will support affirmative action." Sen. Lieberman at least four times voted for experimental voucher bills. Sidekick Lieberman phones Sandra Feldman, teachers'-union honcho, to assure her that a Gore-Lieberman administration would never sign them. In 1998, Sen. Lieberman opined that privatizing at least a portion of Social Security accounts "has to happen." Number-two Lieberman produces an unpublished op-ed piece, allegedly written in June 2000, entitled "My Private Journey Away from Privatization" (the road to Canossa is always public; that is why ambitious politicians are required to travel it). Josephus Publius Lieberman stood in the well of the Senate and called President Clinton's behavior "immoral." I'm Joe, Fly Me praises Clinton's "extraordinary record." Bookies are taking bets on what month Hillary Clinton, with Lieberman in tow, will have some face time with the Rev. Al Sharpton.

■ The surest applause line at the Democratic convention was a defense of abortion—although, as usual, the A-word was left unspoken. Hillary Clinton responded to liberals' worries about Joe Lieberman's perceived moderation by reassuring them that he was down-the-line for abortion. (He wouldn't have been on the ticket otherwise.) Around the same time, courts in New Jersey and Colorado struck down laws requiring that parents be notified of their minor daughters' abortions. As for a requirement of parental *consent*, it is, of course, entirely out of the question. And they say *pro-lifers* are fanatics?

■ Since at least the "Man from Hope" film in 1992, the get-to-know-the-nominee video has become one of the most important pseudo-events of the conventions. Gore's film, shot in cinéma vérité over a single day during his beach vacation, featured shots of him talking with his mouth full, being teased by his children, and sneering at the prospect of watching the movie *The Patriot*. To the extent the film "proved" Gore was a human being—a particularly low bar—it was a success. But what was perhaps more revealing was the choice of director. Gore selected Spike Jonze because he directed Gore's new favorite film, *Being John Malkovich*. In that movie, we learn that there is a portal through which any number of persons can trespass in order to "take over" the actor John Malkovich's body for limited periods of time. What could possibly be Gore's attraction to this film?

■ It turned out that there was one honest woman at the Democratic convention, Rep. Loretta Sanchez of Orange County. The convention was airbrushed into God and Family, Traditional Morality, Lieberman! Gore! But Loretta Sanchez refused to go along with the gag, and planned a big fundraiser at the Playboy Mansion in Los Angeles. Women as Sex Objects, Bunnies in bikinis, Playmates, access to the nude swimming pool, Old Hef in his bathrobe, two blonde playmates, and a stash of Viagra. For laughs, serious oil paintings on the walls. Her arm twisted out of its socket,

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*Don Smith, UPS package car driver, **and***
*Elder P.J. Thomas—co-founders of **Manna Ministries, Alabaster, Alabama***

"We decided that nobody should have to choose between buying food and buying medicine."

"My partner P.J. and I co-founded Manna Ministries 12 years ago with just a **couple of cans of** food. Nowadays, we feed 478 families a month. My employer, **UPS, has been supportive** through it all. Helping me balance delivering packages **with volunteering** 60 hours a week, stocking our pantries and donating money **when I won the** UPS Jim Casey Community Service Award. As for me? I want to **get more food donations,** open Shelby County's first soup kitchen and feed more **shut-ins.** I'm quite a dreamer—there's always help down the road."

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Sanchez crumbled grumpily and canceled. But she was closer to the heart of the Democratic party than all the nearer-my-God-to-thee.

■ In 1992, Jesse Jackson compared Dan Quayle to Herod. A few months ago, he compared George W. Bush to Pontius Pilate. And now he has compared W. to Jefferson Davis. Funny how Jackson is never called a name-caller. Funny how he is never criticized for his abhorrent rhetoric. Funny how he continues as a respected figure in public life—new holder of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in fact.

■ A stunning thing happened at the Democratic convention, and it was reported almost nowhere: Four Cuban-American delegates from Florida walked out when President Clinton took the stage on Opening Night. They walked out—quietly, respectfully, without fanfare—because Clinton's INS had just handed out awards to the 114 agents (114!) who took part in the Elián González raid. The walkout was stunning because a) these were Democratic delegates, loyal party members, b) it was the last thing one would have expected at the Democratic convention, and c) it was brave. If a similar act of protest had occurred at the Republican convention, it—does anyone doubt?—would have been a top story. One of the delegates, Anastasia Garcia, explained that she and her fellows would not have gone through with it if not for the INS awards. "They should have thought about the pain this community has suffered," she said. Maybe so. But the Man Who Feels Pain feels only *certain* pain.

■ Six Boy Scouts leading the Pledge of Allegiance at the Democratic convention were booed by gay delegates from California who were unhappy to see them on the platform. "It was pretty insensitive," said one delegate, referring to the presence of Scouts at a Democratic party function, not to his own reaction. "Most Democrats support the work the Boy Scouts do," said a party flack afterward—somewhat unconvincingly, given the circumstances. When was the last time you saw a Democrat help an old lady across the street?

■ The day of Al Gore's acceptance speech, the news broke that independent counsel Robert Ray had impaneled a new grand jury to consider whether Bill Clinton committed perjury and obstruction of justice. A White House flack saw the fine hand of the vast right-wing conspiracy: "The timing of this leak reeks to high heaven" ("All the earmarks of a carefully orchestrated, politically motivated leak," chimed in Dan Rather). The next day, Judge Richard D. Cudahy, a Carter appointee who sits on the three-judge panel that oversees Ray, admitted that he had inadvertently been the source. Should the grand jury proceed? When the Senate refused to remove the president for high crimes and misdemeanors, that was a political judgment: If Clinton had been thrown out, the legal system would still have had to decide whether to try him. Clinton lied in testimony in a civil suit. When George Washington, in his Farewell Address, had to come up with one example of the public necessity of religion, he offered oaths in court. If any indictment is handed down, it won't be until after Clinton leaves office; the heavens won't fall. Let justice be done.

■ More and more commentators are picking up on the idea, extensively discussed in these pages, that the growing class of new investors is changing American politics. But neither Bush nor Gore appears to have grasped the significance of that class. Both have made proposals to help people build up nest eggs through investment. What they have not done is make an appeal targeted to investors. The party conventions almost entirely ignored investor concerns. The candidates are chasing other demographic categories: soccer moms, lunchpail dads, Hispanics. As the election narrows, perhaps one of them will notice that a lot of those soccer moms now have portfolios.

■ The Lieberman pick, wrote William Safire, might energize "the Hitler vote," but not to worry: "Pat Buchanan should siphon it off." And the *New York Times* lets this man write a column on the precise use of words.

■ Speaking before the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Milwaukee, Gov. Bush pledged a big funding increase for one of Congress's favorite pork-barrel programs. The Education Department's Impact Aid program provides a billion dollars a year to public schools on or near military installations. It is based on the fiction that military families impose huge costs on their civilian neighbors. (In the face of a threat to close a military base, locals suddenly plead that their economy would wither without the federal workers.) Even President Jimmy Carter tried to eliminate the costly subsidy, but Bush would add $310 million to the program for schools in need of physical repairs. When it comes to the military, at least there's no question about the governor's readiness—to pander.

■ If Pat Buchanan has accomplished nothing else this year, his attempted heist of $12.6 million demonstrates the need for rethinking federal subsidies for presidential elections. In 1992, Ross Perot performed the classic task of minor parties, bringing the issue of deficits to the fore. He gained 19 percent of the vote, and the major parties then focused on his issue. This year, Pat Buchanan mastered the esoteric rules of the Perot party, and seized the nomination as a large segment of the Perot party headed for the exit, including Gov. Jesse Ventura. Pat Buchanan's offering of 1930s America First isolationism, Father Coughlin populism, and protectionism seems to have peaked at 1 percent in the polls. For his vice-presidential nominee, he has named Ezola Foster, a black schoolteacher and John Bircher. The nominee of the breakaway Reform faction, John Hagelin, is a professor of physics at Maharishi University and believes in levitation, the only flying physicist we have heard of. Someone, someone, hit the gong, reach for the hook.

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From "Rogues" to Rivals

The State Department's announcement about no more "rogue states" is a policy shift worth pondering. Recently the United States has given dictatorships one break after another: paying one not to export missile technology; dropping our leverage over another's human rights abuses; providing permanent normal trade relations; easing sanctions; pulling back from inspections; providing "respect" for those once reviled; even apologizing for America's past mistakes.

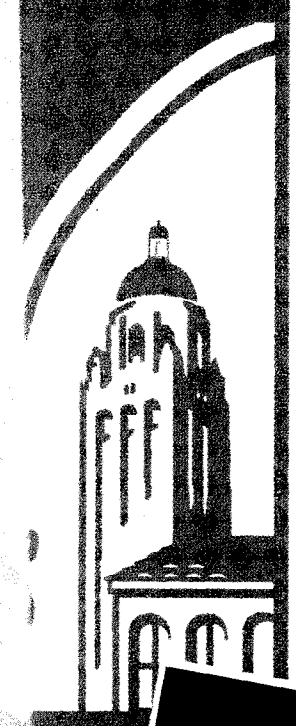
The cold war's central concept was containment, contested dramatically by the division of four countries: Germany, China, Korea, and Vietnam (along with Cuba, and the Florida Strait between the Cuban capitals of Havana and Miami). The collapse of communism knocked out only one: East Germany. The others survived—as did communism's clients Iraq, Syria, and Libya—and continue to inflict misery on masses of people. With Iran's theocracy they are forming an international proliferation league for weapons of mass destruction.

There are reasons to go easy on these regimes. There is little domestic support for a hard-line stance and lots of international displeasure with sanctions. **There is a sense that ex-rogues pose no threat, harming their own people more than others.** There is fear that unless we prop them up they might lash out or just disintegrate, burdening South Korea, for example, as West Germany was burdened ten years ago; better to help them make a "soft landing." Above all is the belief that globalization will make them prosperous, which in turn will make them democratic. So we needn't worry; history will do our work for us.

These regimes are aware of this "American theory" and determined to prove it false by acquiring economic strength while staying politically closed. With China as exemplar they can envision an alternative to America's model in the form of national socialism, that is, fascism. Highly nationalistic, glorifying the state and "the people," political power is concentrated in an elite always ready to use the army and police. Vast social programs enclose every aspect of life. The economy is designed to take full advantage of the global market to strengthen the state, and private economic activity is encouraged this far and no farther. "Market socialism" rules, and democracy is regarded as a menace to the strength of the nation. Russia shows signs of leaning this way.

American trade and investment, pressures to build structures of law, civil society, and free expression, can have an effect. Most of all **the United States needs to see these regimes and their evolving coalition for what they are and to hold them to account.** Dinosaurs they may be, but they have fended off extinction and may have perceived a new way to thrive.

— Charles Hill



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■ On August 11, the *Washington Post* carried a full-page ad submitted by Focus on the Family. It included a remarkably powerful six-box cartoon strip depicting an almost-born fetus whose journey toward daylight is terminally interrupted. The *Los Angeles Times* accepted the ad. The *New York Times* and *USA Today* refused it. Evidently their readers are aesthetes too delicate to contemplate visually what those newspapers support editorially.

■ Newly released test scores show immigrant students in California making huge strides two years after voters passed an initiative replacing bilingual education with English immersion. For students in grades two through six, the median score in all subject areas has risen by an average of 39 percent. School districts with the strictest compliance are showing the greatest improvements. This hasn't stopped the die-hard advocates of bilingual education from nitpicking: Stanford's Kenji Hakuta, a leading theorist of bilingual education, says that some of these gains are deceptive because they came in districts where the test scores previously had been very low. It has apparently not occurred to him that perhaps bilingual education is what had kept them down. Arizona will vote on a similar ballot initiative this November, but the movement won't be going national just yet: Both Gore and Bush are for the status quo. In the case of Gore, that's no surprise. In the case of Bush, it's disappointing—if there's ever been a program that leaves children behind, it's bilingual ed.

■ The forest fires out West, which have claimed over 4 million acres so far, are not a natural disaster. They are an unnatural disaster. If nature took its course, small fires would clean out the underbrush. But the federal government suppressed small fires for a century, making much of the West into a tinderbox. And it refuses to let timber companies thin the forests. That leaves "prescribed burns" as the only way to *prevent* raging fires, if they do not get out of control and *become* raging fires. This year's fire season should remind us that the environment has to be saved—sometimes from environmentalists.

■ The *New York Times* ran an alarming front-page story, complete with a photo, about a hole in the ice over the North Pole caused by global warming. Apparently holiday cruisers in the Arctic were dismayed to discover that they could not have their pictures snapped while standing on ice floes at the Pole. The *Times* reported that "the last time scientists can be certain the pole was awash in water was more than 50 million years ago." But the U.N.'s records show no net warming in summertime Arctic temperatures for the past 70 years. The Arctic was as warm in the 1930s and '40s as it is today, and probably the reason no one saw open water in the far north then is that vacationers didn't tend to cruise to the Pole during the Depression and World War II. Even National Public Radio pointed out that as Arctic ice shifts under the influence of wind and tide, it cracks, revealing open water anywhere from time to time. No matter—the melting North Pole has already become a political urban legend.

JOE, YOU'VE CHANGED

Chosen as a sort of Tonto
Who was anti-lust—a must,
What with icky tribal scandals
Leaving soccer squaws nonplussed;
Joe, at recent campfire councils
Whoop-de-doing with the braves,
Has been morphing so, smart wampum
Bets his smoke says "Jesus Saves."

—W. H. VON DREELE

■ The Clinton administration has proposed a series of complex and expensive regulations to guard the privacy of medical information. It's a legitimate concern: Some of the information to which employers and insurers have access is highly sensitive. But has anyone asked why these third parties have or even want access to this information in the first place? In a free-market health-care system, patients would be able to pay for routine medical expenses directly and would own any insurance policies they needed. Employers and insurers would have much less need to collect personal information, and policyholders' demands for privacy would be given weight. Instead, the government encourages people to have their employers buy insurance to cover their health costs. It's an expensive arrangement, and one of its costs is the integrity of the doctor-patient relationship.

■ Death can be a stage. Always an exit from the world, it is sometimes clearly foreseen and consciously met. On these occasions it is the ultimate command performance. In July 1918, former czar Nicholas II, his wife, and five children were murdered in a provincial basement by Communist thugs, on clear, though elliptical, orders from Lenin. Nicholas had been a bad sovereign, and his wife a bad counselor. But they had surrendered power without complaint, and offered no resistance to the new regime. Their murders—justified, not by any deed, but simply by who they were—were a foretaste of hecatombs to come. They met their imprisonment and end with patience and composure. The Russian Orthodox Church was right to canonize them, 82 years and one month later.

■ NR notes belatedly and with deep regret the death of Anthony T. Bouscaren. Professor Bouscaren, a scholar who taught at LeMoyne College in Syracuse, New York, died on his 80th birthday after a painful illness. He was an early asso-

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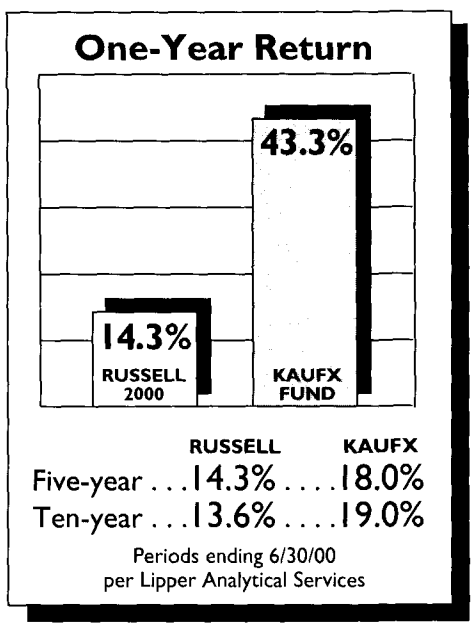

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California's Slipping

Not in the ocean, silly, but
From Al Gore's sweaty grip;
Al's been advised by Daley to
Prepare for one more trip—
The problem being Dubya, whose
Español's *getting winks*
From voting-age muchachas, *while*
Gore's formal Spanish stinks.

—W. H. von Dreele

ciate of National Review, a prolific writer of articles and books, most of them directed to the Soviet enterprise. He was a graduate of Yale (1942), and a recipient of two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He was active in the Captured Nations organization and in the campaigns for office of Senators Barry Goldwater and James L. Buckley. The editors extend their condolences to his wife and three sons.

CAMPAIGN 2000

Gore More Years?

It's not over till the dull man sings. But Al Gore's acceptance speech in Los Angeles, while perhaps not singing, was not dull. This election won't be dull either.

Gore had some contradictory tasks to perform. He had to deal with the highly mixed legacy of his predecessor, and he had to fuse, Janus-like, both the party's liberal and New Democratic faces.

He mentioned Bill Clinton exactly once, with a thank-you in his opener. Back to Arkansas, Wild Child. But he used Clinton's most valuable bequest, the nine-year boom over which he has presided (the Democrats call it a seven-and-a-half-year boom, to make it coincide with Clinton's inauguration, but who's counting?). "Now we turn the page," Gore said, "and write a new chapter." His new chapter is actually old, a New Deal/Great Society list of governmental good works: spending on public schools and prescription drugs; hands off Social Security and Medicare; more community police; a cure for cancer. He promised tax cuts, but only for "the right people."

Conceptually, the new and the old may seem to pull apart, but rhetorically they work in tandem. The surplus generated under the New Democrats is the cupboard from which the Old Democratic goodies are to be distributed. It is also the guarantee of future good behavior: Who will fear class warfare from the man who was vice president while stocks flew to the moon?

Gore's speech was also notable for its omissions: The culture war was soft-pedaled (and he had nixed the fundraiser at the Playboy Mansion). He backed abortion, once, without mentioning the A-word. He even threw in a line about protecting children from "entertainment . . . that glorifies violence and indecency." This was pretty cheeky, after four days of shaking down the violent and the indecent on their home turf, but everyone in the Democratic party behaved.

As a performer, Gore did a decent job. It should be no consolation to Republicans that their nominee has an even lower threshold of expectation to cross.

Republican fantasies of a blowout, along the lines of Bush-Dukakis in 1988, should be retired. Michael Dukakis was hobbled by the Pledge of Allegiance fiasco; by furloughing Willie Horton (a deed first publicized, *nota bene*, by Al Gore); by his absurd ride in the tank. He had not helped preside over a boom and burgeoning surplus; the Soviet Union still existed. Even so, when at the end of that campaign Dukakis made populist appeals of the kind Gore has now begun with, he picked up points. George H. W. Bush's margins in key midwestern states—the battlegrounds in this election—were narrow.

The better parallel to this election might be McKinley–Bryan in 1896. Bryan was electrifying, which Gore is not. McKinley (and his wily manager, Mark Hanna) stopped him by making the case that populism, however attractive, would actually hurt American workers. The late 19th century's workers are the early 21st century's new investor class, who can understand that you can't target the "right people" without harming everyone.

But the case has to be made. A moment's flinching at the charge of favoring the rich, and Gore will be all over George W. Gore is not the Boy Orator of the Platte, but he knows how to slug it out.

THE ECONOMY

How We Got Here

Presidents tend to get the credit or blame for the condition of the economy during their administrations. It would take someone far more modest than Bill Clinton to resist claiming credit for an economy as strong as ours has been, as he did for the umpteenth time at the Democratic convention. If in claiming that credit Clinton exaggerated how bad things had been before he came along—the Bush recession lasted only eight months, and economic growth was running at a healthy 4 percent clip by the end of 1992—this too is within the bounds of partisan rhetoric.

In any case, it is less important that the right party get credit for economic success than that the right policies do. And here Clinton must be faulted. He and his subordinates do not understand the reasons for their own success. According to them, Clinton's signal accomplishment was to raise taxes in 1993: The tax increase replaced deficits with

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surpluses, which in turn reduced interest rates, which stimulated economic growth.

Clinton has the story backward. Interest rates were falling before he raised taxes, and they started rising almost as soon as he did—not to fall again until Republicans took Congress. The economy slowed down after the tax increase: The growth rate from 1993 to 1995 was below the norm for an economy in the early stages of recovery. The best that can be said for Clinton's tax hike is that it did not hurt the economy as badly as its Republican critics at the time foolishly predicted.

To Clinton's credit, he pursued other policies that more than compensated for his tax increase. The North American Free Trade Agreement and the trade deal with China cut taxes on international trade. Clinton allowed Alan Greenspan to reduce inflation, which had numerous beneficial effects. Lower inflation increased the rewards to work, save, and invest. It reduced interest rates, which made stocks more valuable. And it substantially reduced the effective burden of capital-gains taxes. In 1997, Clinton went further by acceding to Republican demands for an outright cut in capital-gains tax rates. The resulting high economic growth caused the budget surplus—not the other way around.

Yet in Los Angeles, Clinton boasted about none of the policies that actually contributed to the boom. To do so would have required him to share credit with others—Greenspan, the Republican Congress—and to alienate the protectionists in his party. If he was unwilling to do that, it would surely be asking too much of him to acknowledge that he also helped the economy by failing to pass the energy tax and the health-care plan he proposed in 1993.

Which brings us back to the question of partisan credit. Americans should be more grateful for all the things Clinton did not do, or was not able to do, than for anything he did.

RUSSIA

Where Life is Cheap

TODAY's Russians are like the rest of us, are they not? With a president, elections, and fast food. They shoot up the Chechens, of course, but bearded Islamic fundies can't expect anything else. And they may be a little rough around the edges, but gangsters are everywhere. Where Russia is concerned, Western sentimentality and apologetics die hard. The fate of the submarine *Kursk* throws the reality of Russia into shocking relief. The upheavals of the last decade have hardly touched the ingrained Communist mentality.

Soviet-trained as they are, the Russian leadership from President Putin downward reacted to the disaster by covering up. The news blackout lasted 48 hours. Then the lying began. Contradictory official versions circulated, so that it was impossible to establish timing, cause and effect, the probability of rescue, or even whether there was still radio contact with the trapped crew. Four days after the accident, President Putin appeared in his swimming trunks on a Black Sea beach to hold a press conference, during which he expressed no concern for the men or their families.

After the cover-up and the lying came the attempt to blame the West. A Russian admiral was found to claim falsely that a British submarine had collided with the *Kursk*. It was put forth as sinister that two American submarines were within 70 miles. The last and perhaps the most wicked element was the refusal to accept specialist assistance from the West that might have saved the lives of any surviving members of the unfortunate crew. Another Russian admiral was found to stress the need to protect naval secrecy from spies. So the British and Norwegian rescue vessels were permitted to arrive only when there was neither hope nor purpose to their mission. The Putin regime preferred to see these men die rather than do everything possible to save them. That is close to murder.

In the Soviet Union, cover-ups and lies were routine. Not a word leaked out about the large-scale rebellions that used to occur regularly in the Gulag, with a subsequent massacre of prisoners. No word either when in 1960 a new intercontinental ballistic missile blew up at its launch site in Baikonur, killing all the watching officials, including the general commanding the strategic rocket forces. Straying into Soviet airspace, a jet was blown out of the skies and its passengers killed on the pretext that it came from the West and therefore must be spying. The meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor brought together every one of the Soviet techniques of disinformation. Western monitoring was then the instrument that forced out the truth, as now in the case of the *Kursk*. Only a few months ago, a train was found abandoned for three years on a railway siding with 200 unidentified corpses of Russian soldiers in it.

The Communist party may be no more, but it is still not possible to bring President Putin or those admirals to account for their behavior. In Russia, contempt for human life remains a constant.

OBITUARY

Ruth Berenson, R.I.P.

RUTH BERENSON had it in her all along to be a liberated woman, but she didn't get to the starting line until age 64, when Norbert Muhlen—her excessively German, but also excessively engaging, husband of many years—died, leaving her with very little money, a large dark old apartment on New York's Upper West Side, and the world's largest collection of Middle European beer coasters. Norbert, a stalwart anti-Communist, was the American correspondent for *Die Welt* and NR's expert on German affairs in the Cold War years, but his journalistic efforts never brought in a great deal of cash.

Ruth, who was related to *the* Berenson, Bernard Berenson, was a graduate of Smith College with a doctorate in art history from Radcliffe. She filled in as NR's art editor for a num-

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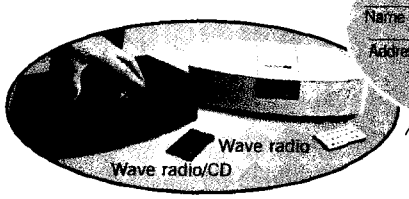

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ber of years. Her taste was impeccable, and she wrote with style and panache. But her major role was that of the obedient and supportive housewife. She was a marvelous hostess. One met the most interesting people at Ruth and Norbert's, and sat late at the dining-room table talking of this and that. But then, suddenly, Norbert was dead, and Ruth's friends worried about her future. She was at an age when most people are looking forward to retirement. But we didn't know our Ruth. She took hold. Did she ever take hold!

She sold the apartment, she sold the collection of beer coasters for a quite astonishing sum, she sold the other clutter Norbert had collected over a lifetime of collecting. She took back her maiden name and moved to Washington. She applied for, and landed, a job as associate deputy chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, and was very soon recognized as one of the most effective advocates of American culture in the international art world. Nothing was too much of a challenge for the new Ruth. Her friends reveled in her transformation, in the assurance she brought to her job at the NEA, and later with the U.S. Information Agency's bureau of educational and cultural affairs. Ruth Berenson died August 14 of lung cancer, age 83, having conquered every hurdle life had placed in her path but the last.

—PRISCILLA L. BUCKLEY

■ NOTES & ASIDES ■

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: You are too modest in your protest that you lack literacy in German. In answering Mr. Paterson (July 31), you were able to interject the pejorative form of the phrase *über alles* into your response. As a wordsmith, you can appreciate the fact that words often have shades of meaning. The word *über* can mean *either* "*over*" *or* "above," a fact that was put to good use by propagandists during World War II.

As used by August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben when, in 1841, he penned the words to the music that was to become the German national anthem, the sense of the word was "above," as in our country above all, not, as in the propagandist's usage, our country *over* all. There is a difference here that I'm sure you'll appreciate. Hoffmann, a nationalist, strongly desired the fusion of the many German principalities, fiefdoms, etc., into one nation.

The Nazis saw no reason to change the words. The Federal Republic of Germany, sensitive to the phrase's meaning(s), removed this portion of the anthem in 1952. The result: a verse almost impossible to sing, totally lacking in inspiration, but PC to the max.

Aside from Germany's ability to shovel out billions of marks in reparations, no one seems capable of giving voice to anything positive about that land. Might one hope to find some discourse on this subject in NR?

Charles N. Yongue
Staten Island, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Yongue: By all means. Proceed.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Bill: The National Center for Policy Analysis has an online Social Security calculator, an indispensable tool in the Social Security reform debate, which should be of interest to your readers. In response to personal input it shows:

- What you are likely to pay in Social Security taxes;
- How much you are likely to receive in benefits;
- What you could have received had those taxes been invested;
- What rate of return you can expect from the current system;
- What the payroll tax will have to be at your retirement to pay for Social Security, Medicare, etc.

I hope you'll log on to our site at www.mysocialsecurity.org and check out the calculator for yourself.

Regards,
John [Goodman]
President, NCPA
Dallas, Tex.

Dear John: It is a wonderful aid through the morass of it all.

Cordially, Bill

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I am 16 years old and am compiling a book of positive, practical advice for teenage boys. I would appreciate your contribution. If it benefits even one boy, then you will have done something good. And a portion of any profits will go to charity.

Bennat Berger
Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

Dear Bennat: It is fine that you seek to help boys your own age. I wish you every success, and could do no more than counsel them to admire your own achievements.

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: I have a small gift that I would like to share with you. I thought of this some 35–40 years ago when I was an undergraduate at Cornell and first became acquainted with your writings. As I hit 60 recently, I figure I'd better do this now, or run the risk that my own mortality (not to mention yours) will otherwise bury my gift with me.

While in no way wishing for your demise, I believe I've found the perfect epitaph for you. If you like it, please feel free to use it. I pride myself on its double and triple entendres. It would read, quite simply:

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.
1925–20XX
HE WAS ALWAYS RIGHT
BUT NOW HE'S LEFT

Sincerely,
Michael L. Lichtig, M.D.
Tinton Falls, N.J.

Dear Dr. Lichtig: No no no! When I leave, I'll go right home!

Cordially,

—WFB

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 ■

Kissing Up

The meaning of Al and Tipper's act

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

IT is a sad thing when the sight of a man kissing his lawfully wedded wife gives rise to unworthy thoughts. But when Vice President Gore grabbed Tipper and went into a deep and prolonged smooch with her, I was instantly reminded of the words that Oscar Wilde puts into the mouth of Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public."

To be sure, the Brits—and in this context Wilde must be reckoned a Brit—are made notoriously uncomfortable by the sight of married couples expressing affection for each other. There were raised eyebrows in London when President Reagan and Nancy were found holding hands. The commonly expressed view was: Surely they should have got over that sort of thing by now? But nobody doubted that it was real affection being expressed; nor suspected that they were holding hands in order to be seen and photographed.

Alas, Al Gore is such a scripted politician, and the Democratic campaign machine so reluctant to leave anything to chance, that the unworthy thought forced itself into one's mind: I wonder how they did the focus group on this?

Did Al and Tipper personally kiss in front of a demographically accurate cross section of the electorate? Or were look-alikes employed? Did they try out different positions? Or several lengths of time? And did the responses—from the focus group, that is, not from Tipper—vary significantly according to ethno-cultural background? ("The imam from Dearborn is definitely switching to the Republicans; and the woman from Wellesley is switching to Nader; but Al scored big with every stay-at-home soccer mom from every Dullsville in the whole of flyover land who identifies with Tipper. Oh, sorry, Mrs. Gore.")

An unworthy suspicion perhaps, but surely a reasonable one. After all, before the convention, the vice president's weakness in the polls was attributable to two factors: First, he scored very badly among white voters; and, second, this low score was not offset by the "gender gap"—i.e., the strong lead among women voters that recent Democratic presidential candidates have usually enjoyed.

One can imagine how unfair this must have seemed to Gore. Here he is, an apparently faithful married man, loyal to Tipper and devoted to his children; yet women voters were remaining firmly resistant to his respectable charms even as they clearly still pined for Bad Boy Bill Clinton, the White House womanizer, or began drifting away to another rake, albeit a reformed one, in the person of George W. Bush.

Nor was there a great deal he could do in the way of policy to win them back. All that his "women's issues" advisers advised, he had already either promised or performed—up to and including a pledge to allow a pregnant woman on death row to exercise her right to choose by either delaying or not delaying her execution until her child was born. He could list these commitments in his acceptance speech, as he relentlessly did, but he could hardly add to them in any significant way.

Was there anything left? Well, he could make a different sort of appeal to the women's vote. He could go after the Lifetime television audience by making himself the hero of their daydreams. He could become a Harlequin hero for a day. What, you don't see Al Gore as the romantic hero of a bodice-ripper? Too cold, too calculating, too policy-wonkish? But there are two sorts of Harlequin hero. The first is the Mr. Rochester figure, dark, brooding, sensuous, and above all dangerous. Mr. Rochester is the ravishing hero who carries off the heroine to a fate worse than death despite her protests and in line with her secret desires. Well, back in England I knew Mr. Rochester; Mr. Rochester was a friend of mine; and I can tell you that Al Gore is no Mr. Rochester. Besides which, playing up to the dark fantasies of the Lifetime audience is much too risky a strategy for any candidate today, especially one in political hock to the National Organization for Women.

The second kind of hero is another matter altogether—Dobbin in *Vanity Fair*. Dobbin is the loyal, dependable, loving man to whom the chastened heroine returns after Mr. Rochester has abandoned her in the slums of Naples with debts, a child, and no return ticket. The heroine naturally saves Dobbin in return; she saves him from terminal dullness.

A hero like Dobbin may still be able to win women's hearts simply by sticking around for the long term. Husbands come and go these days. The more this

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happens, the more married women (and men) fear it will happen to them, and the more they will be moved emotionally by clear evidence that a particular husband is home for good. The best sign that a husband is not about to take French leave is a clear demonstration that he still loves his wife—not is fond of her, not thinks of her as a comfortable old shoe, but fancies her sexually in the most obvious and straightforward way. Mr. Gore duly provided a demonstration of this.

It is not hard to imagine the collective sigh in the living rooms of America as Al and Tipper went into their clinch. Husbands would have sighed along too, some from the calculation that it would do them no harm to go along with this, others because they have gradually yielded to the feminization of American culture, feel the need to get in touch with their feelings, and guess that this must be what is meant. Only pre-adolescent boys would have remained stony-faced. In any event, the polls are now in—and the vice president's stock has soared with women voters. It was the Kiss Heard 'round the World.

About the only comfort we can draw from this is that if America were facing real, dangerous, and recognizable problems, then a kiss would be just a kiss. If our present politics seem to be shaped under Bill Clinton by Jerry Springer and now under Al Gore by Oprah, that is largely because Americans are enjoying a long vacation from serious anxieties. And while peace and prosperity hum along, Americans will feel that they can afford to choose political leaders on the principle of niceness. But a major terrorist attack, a serious "correction" in the market, a sudden rise in inflation or unemployment, a provocative move by China against Taiwan—and the voters would start asking serious questions and expecting serious answers. If they did not, we would then have to ponder the fate of an earlier Republic. As Browning wrote:

As for Venice and her people, merely
born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage,
mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when
the kissing had to stop?

NR

■ THE MEDIA ■

Pests and Pesticides

The organic foodies attack Stossel

DENNIS T. AVERY

LAST February, John Stossel gave us a powerful exposé of the organic-food myth on ABC's *20/20*. Now the organic industry (and the environmental movement that sponsors it) are trying to punish Stossel, warn other journalists away, and erase the *20/20* tapes forever.

Newspapers all over the country recently published an organic-industry charge that Stossel had deceived the American public in his broadcast. The organic fans say Stossel should be fired. Katherine DiMatteo of the Organic Trade Association says her group is considering a class-action lawsuit because of Stossel's "damage to the organic industry." (Amusingly, the group's press releases were distributed by Fenton Communications, which—just a few years ago—gave us the Alar hoax that had mothers snatching healthful apples out of their children's lunchboxes.)

What was Stossel's awful mistake? He said ABC had tested organic and mainstream vegetables, and found no pesticide residues on either kind—when in fact, ABC hadn't tested *any* vegetables for *pesticides*. But then, his program wasn't about pesticides, it was about bacterial contamination.

Stossel apologized to his viewers on the August 11 *20/20* broadcast for the error in what was essentially a footnote of the segment. But he also reiterated his central point: ABC News tested mainstream and organic foods for bacteria. They wanted to see if organic consumers were at greater health risk because organic farmers typically use pathogen-laden animal manure to fertilize their food crops. (Mainstream farmers rarely use manure on food crops; mostly they use chemical nitrogen taken from the air.)

The answer to *that* question was a loud yes: ABC News found the levels of dangerous bacteria on the organic spring greens and sprouts more than ten times higher than in their mainstream counterparts. Stossel told his viewers the exact truth about finding much more *E. coli* bacterial contamination on the organic vegetables. The organic faction counters that ordinary *E. coli* is only a little dangerous, and that people shouldn't worry unless they find the more virulent O157 strain—which can kill healthy people and leave even its survivors with permanent damage to internal organs such as kidneys and livers. But while it's true that ordinary *E. coli* kills only the weak, millions of other people get severe stomach pains from it, and a few hundred thousand per year must visit the hospital. Dr. Lester Crawford, former head of food-safety inspection for the Food and Drug Administration, said on the *20/20* broadcast that health authorities consider any *E. coli* in food a health hazard and an indication of filth and contamination.

John Stossel by Roman Genn

Mr. Avery is director of global food issues for the Hudson Institute. He was formerly the senior agricultural analyst for the U.S. Department of State.

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As for "damage to the organic industry," the most damaging statements were made by its own spokeswoman. When Stossel asked DiMatteo if organic food was more nutritious than regular food, she said, "It's as nutritious as any other product." (She said it twice.)

That's a radical scaledown, coming from an industry that has claimed for decades that its products are vastly more nutritious, more "natural," and more vigorously healthful. They've trashed mainstream farmers unceasingly, claiming they produce pallid food, bereft of the rich nutrition our forefathers enjoyed. We have to assume DiMatteo finally told the truth on *20/20* because Crawford was on the program, and would have exposed the usual organic lies about extra nutrients. He knows that many comparative tests of organic and regular food have been done over the decades, and have found no consistent differences. Tufts University even held a conference in 1997 comparing the nutritive quality of organic and mainstream crops from 19 countries. It turned out that the varieties of carrots and spinach the growers planted made a bigger difference than the growing system.

The British organic industry was asked the same nutrition question last year, at an official government hearing. They claimed they hadn't had time or funding to do the complex tests. But they've been making their claims of superior nutrition for more than 50 years. Their poster boy is Prince Charles, who not only has a fortune estimated at $475 million, but is the patron of the Royal Agricultural College. Surely, the Prince could have gotten some testing done?

Stossel also asked DiMatteo if organic food was safer. Again, she felt forced to tell the truth. "Organic agriculture," she admitted, "is not particularly a food-safety claim." In fact, the organic label means only that the farmer used organic fertilizer instead of chemical fertilizer, and used "natural" pesticides such as copper sulfate (broadly toxic) and sulfur (a soil contaminant). DiMatteo was forced to admit the truth on national television. Now she's demanding that ABC never show the program again. No wonder.

Even Stossel's mistake—saying "our tests surprisingly found no pesticide residue on the conventional samples or the organic"—was not an error about the underlying scientific truth, merely an error of attribution. He would have been correct if he had simply referred to published government data. The FDA finds no pesticide residues on about 70 percent of the unwashed vegetables it tests—and it mostly tests where it expects to find pesticides. The FDA's market-basket survey annually finds we're being exposed to less than 1 percent of the "allowable" amount of pesticide residue (which has 1,000-fold safety factors built in).

Meanwhile, Dr. Bruce Ames, to whom President Clinton gave the National Science Medal just last year, says 99.9 percent of the pesticides we ingest are natural; thousands of these natural pesticides are produced in the plants to fend off pests. So much for organic food being pesticide-free.

Despite the fact that these are carcinogens, our non-smokers' cancer risks have been declining significantly throughout the pesticide era. (Stomach cancer, for example, is down by three-fourths.) The dose makes the poison, and we ingest only tiny doses of pesticides, be they natural or synthetic.

Why, then, the uproar over Stossel's mistake? It's being driven by the same politically correct agenda that has led Marian Burros, the food editor of the *New York Times*, to write more than 100 columns and articles over the last two years praising organic food. (That's not news, but a campaign.)

Organic food is now the icon on which the environmental movement is based. Without the lie that organic farming gives us more nutritious foods, the average consumer might have more respect for the abundance provided by high-yield farming. Without the lie that organic food is safer for people, parents might worry about their children's food being fertilized with pathogen-laden animal manure. Without the lie that pesticides endanger wildlife, city folks might realize that without high-yield farming, we would already have plowed down every square mile of forest on the planet to feed ourselves.

The organic and environmental movements can't let the facts get out. They need to have Stossel punished so harshly that no other reporter will dare expose the organic myth. **NR**

■ THE MILITARY ■

Up to Job One?

The Democrats and defense

ANDREW J. BACEVICH

HEADING to Los Angeles for their convention, Democrats promised that they would talk specifics. Not for them the airy generalities that Republicans had allegedly lofted at their own conclave two weeks before. When it came to matters of national defense, however, that prescription apparently did not apply.

In fact, the featured speakers appearing in the Staples Center gave only the barest attention to the armed forces of the World's Only Superpower. When they touched on defense at all, it was simply to offer ritualistic assurances that all is well with the troops. Bill Clinton testified that the American military continues to be "the best-trained, best-equipped, most effective fighting force in the world." Joe Lieberman, the newly anointed vice-presidential nominee, outdid Clinton by insisting that "our fighting men and women are the best-trained, best-equipped, most powerful fighting force in the history of the world." Without offering details, he vowed that under a Gore-Lieberman administration, "they will stay that way."

As for the man of the hour, Al Gore repeated the same mantra. After ticking off a laundry list of promised domestic initiatives—paying off the national debt, raising the minimum wage, providing universal preschool, etc.—Gore had only this to say about the military: "I will keep America's defenses strong. I will make sure our armed forces continue to be the best-equipped, best-trained, and best-led in the entire world." Gore refrained from

Mr. Bacevich is director of the Center for International Relations at Boston University.

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mentioning any specifics, but then so does the Democratic platform.

That no leading Democrat would venture anything beyond platitudes—not even expressing an opinion on whether defense spending is too high, too low, or just about right—is itself fitting, a symbol of the neglect that the U.S. military has suffered over the past eight years. When it comes to providing for the common defense, the record of the present administration is abysmal. The Clinton-Gore team presided over a massive reduction in the size of the military—with the active-duty force down from 2.1 million a decade ago to 1.4 million today. While cutting overall troop strength, the administration simultaneously charged the military with a host of new commitments, from the Balkans to the Persian Gulf to Latin America to sub-Saharan Africa. The predictable result has been to tax operational readiness to the limit. Each of the services today shows growing readiness problems—ships going to sea with incomplete crews, declining aircraft operational rates, combat units reporting that they are not ready to fight.

But the real challenges to American security are not those that the nation faces today; they are those that await it tomorrow. It is on the crucial question of how the military should adapt itself to the still-evolving realities of the post–Cold War era that the administration's abdication of responsibility is most evident. It has simply let the Pentagon operate on autopilot. Where it counts, the commander in chief has been AWOL.

To be sure, the president who encountered boos when he visited the aircraft carrier *Theodore Roosevelt* shortly after taking office in 1993, and whose ill-considered push for gays in the military resulted in something akin to open revolt, has in the years since reached an accommodation with the top brass. A negotiated cease-fire between the Pentagon and the Clinton White House has preserved a semblance of civilian control. But control is not leadership. What ails the American military today, despite Democratic protestations that all is well, is just that: a failure to provide at the very top the leadership that the military needs.

Guaranteeing the nation's future security may or may not require bigger budgets or more Americans in uniform. It most emphatically will require well-informed yet tough-minded political leaders who engage in a continuing dialogue with senior military professionals about basic defense policy. Since 1993, that dialogue has been nonexistent.

The current leadership deficit manifests itself most clearly in the growing gap between what the Pentagon, left to its own devices, describes as its reform agenda, and any discernible progress toward implementing that agenda.

Joint Vision 2020, an extraordinary document published earlier this year by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, illustrates that gap. *JV2020* is the Pentagon's vision for the future. It specifies requirements that the military must begin working toward *now* in order to be able to respond to threats projected to emerge in the years to come.

■

The real challenges to American security are those that await it tomorrow.

■

This document distills that vision into a single phrase: "full spectrum dominance." By its own estimate, the military requires not simply capabilities, nor even superiority, but *dominance* across the entire range of contingencies—from all-out conflict involving weapons of mass destruction to high-intensity conventional wars, from peacekeeping to peace enforcement, from humanitarian relief to "support to domestic authorities," from counterterrorism to cyberwar. The military must be able to assert that dominance either unilaterally or in conjunction with allies. It must do so while integrating all services, taking greater advantage of the reserves, and interacting seamlessly with civilian agencies, including nongovernmental organizations. In every instance, it must accomplish the assigned mission expeditiously and without undue cost in lives and treasure. Implied but not stated is that the U.S. military will serve in perpetuity not only as an instrument for global power projection, but also as a global 911 force, a global constabulary, and a global humanitarian-relief agency—all the while adhering rigorously to changing American societal norms.

This is, to put it mildly, a tall order.

As *JV2020* frankly acknowledges, filling that order will entail a fundamental transformation of the existing military establishment. Organization, training, doctrine, technology, service roles and missions—even the collective mindset of the officer corps—must change radically.

That's what the Pentagon at the end of the Clinton-Gore era says it needs to do. Yet the central thrust of actual defense policy throughout that era—measured by actions, not words—has been to *avert* change. As if preserved in amber, the military legacy of the Cold War—the carrier battle groups, the mechanized divisions, and the manned fighter-bombers that have for so long defined the core of service identity—survives intact. A plethora of blue-ribbon commissions, congressionally mandated studies, and analyses by think tanks that have questioned the utility of such forces in an information age have produced next to nothing in terms of meaningful change. In the great debate over defense transformation, the Clinton White House has abstained. As a result, innovation lags. Inertia has prevailed.

There is an argument to be made that in their totality the grand aspirations of *JV2020* are unaffordable, probably unnecessary, and in all likelihood simply preposterous: A more realistic blueprint for the military's future is in order. There is also an argument to be made that resistance to change within the ranks has more to do with protecting fiefdoms and comfortable habits than with grappling honestly with the security needs of the nation: Complacency and parochialism have produced obstructionism.

In either case, the necessary ingredient is civilian leadership, sufficiently knowledgeable and engaged in matters of national defense to prod, challenge, and motivate military professionals to be true to their obligations.

That too is a tall order. But it is one that demands attention. This much we can say for certain: Whichever party wins the White House in November, any administration committed to ensuring that the U. S. military of the future is indeed the best-trained, best-equipped, most effective fighting force in the world will need to offer more than the handful of clichés uttered by the Democrats in Los Angeles. **NR**

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Jerusalem (I)

Whose city – whose "holy city" – is it?

It's thirty-three years, since Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in 1967, that the city of Jerusalem, which had been divided for nineteen years, has been reunited under Israeli rule. But there is still much talk, and many people insist, that solution of the "Middle East Problem" will not be possible until Israeli Jews relinquish their "occupation" and restore the holy city -- or, at the very minimum, its eastern part -- to its "rightful owners", the Moslem Arabs.

What are the facts?

A city of many nationalities. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever, asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

"Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital."

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city to Israel in the Six-Day War. It now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Moslems and Jews) with its two mosques, El Aksa and the Dome of the Rock. It is the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina -- cities that no "infidel" may visit.

A tenuous Moslem claim. It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli Government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim of their right to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city". And it would be an insult to all Moslems and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".

Jerusalem: Never an Arab capital. But the city of Jerusalem -- in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus -- has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national or even a provincial or sub-provincial capital of any country since biblical times. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

At the center of Jewish life. Jerusalem has stood at the center of the Jewish people's national life since King David made it the capital of his kingdom in 1003 BCE. It remained the capital until the kingdom was conquered by the Babylonians 400 years later. After the return from Babylonian exile, Jerusalem again served as the capital of the Jewish people for the next five and a half centuries.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have synagogues and other holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous and people wouldn't accept it. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the mosques on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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JAY NORDLINGER

THE big question on everyone's mind at our political conventions is: What music are they going to play?

Well, this may not be the biggest question, but it is an interesting one nonetheless. Music has been part of our politics since the beginning—fifes and drums and all that. At the conventions, aficionados like to speculate about what music the organizers will play for certain speakers. (Sometimes—in fact, usually—this speculation is mischievous.) They also like to divine hidden meaning in the music that those organizers have, in fact, chosen.

This choice, though minor, is not inconsequential: Get it just right, and the speaker has a lift; get it wrong somehow, and you weigh him down.

Gerald Ford provides an interesting case (really). For him, they have always played "Hail to the Victors," the University of Michigan fight song. Problem is, the song features the word "hail," sung over and over, always accompanied by the thrusting out of an arm. When a stadium, or an arena, gets rockin', it looks unnervingly like the rally at Nuremberg.

For Jimmy Carter, they often played "Marching Through Georgia," until the candidate complained that this was, after all, a northern song, celebrating the South's—particularly Georgia's—most ignominious hour.

When Ronald Reagan entered a hall, they usually used "California, Here I Come," which was a little awkward, because—at least in 1976, 1980, and 1984—he was trying to get to, or return to, Washington, D.C., not wanting to be sent "right back where I started from."

This year, too, contained its share of musical fun. At the Republican convention, John McCain strode out to the theme from *Star Wars*, reminding people that he had used imagery from this movie during the primaries ("I'm Luke Skywalker, trying to get out of the Death Star"). For the Texans, there was a lot of "Deep in the Heart of Texas," along with "The Yellow Rose of Texas"; they both make for rousing convention numbers.

The Republicans' cutest moment, however, came when Congressman Vito Fossella walked out to talk about Social Security reform. The music? "When I'm Sixty-four."

And the GOP, bless its flag-waving heart, has found a bona fide anthem: Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." They have used it for the past five presidential campaigns, and it holds up surprisingly well, especially in emotion-charged settings. This must be

Reuters

Tipper cuts a rug.

the most successful marriage of song and party since "Happy Days Are Here Again" and the Democrats. If the Republicans play their cards right, they will be firing up "God Bless . . ." for another generation at least.

At the Democratic convention, Hillary Clinton was greeted with "New York, New York," a somewhat dicey choice: It emphasized that she is a newcomer to the state, hoping to "make it." For her husband, the president, they played terrible, electronic, fascist-sounding music, to accompany his terrible, fascist-seeming entrance through the unseen (except on gigantic video screens) corridors of the arena. Talk about Nuremberg; some of us wondered whether Leni Riefenstahl had died (she has not).

Clinton ended his speech with the admonition "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow," whereupon, with sure timing, the convention-meisters blared the Clinton theme from 1992 and 1996 (Fleetwood Mac's "Don't Stop . . ."). This has been an effective song for the president, as every politician wants to be thought of as forward-looking. ("Coming to America" seemed not to work for Michael Dukakis in 1988, but then, to be fair to the song, Michael Dukakis seemed not to work as a candidate.)

Caroline Kennedy got, naturally, "Camelot," which was not really appropriate to a political convention. The song is simply too fruity, too light, too nothing. Her uncle, Senator Ted, however, was accorded the perfect song for his entrance: "You're Still the One." It is a terrific pop number anyway, and it delivered exactly the message the Democrats sought for their liberal lion, forever a convention favorite.

For Joe Lieberman? Not "Hava Nagila," as one Lieberman-weary wag had speculated, but the theme from *Chariots of Fire*. This music, easy to swallow at first, soon turns treacly and cloying—not unlike the candidate. But millions love the *Chariots* theme, and the movie happens (well, probably not happens) to feature a Jewish athlete who overcomes discrimination.

Finally, the Big Kahuna, Al Gore: He enthused his way through the crowd to the strains of syrupy, stringy, vaguely patriotic-sounding music that evidently was composed specially for this event. If his fall campaign is not better than this music, the Republicans have little to worry about.

Speaking of politics and music, there has recently been released an album that should belong to political junkies everywhere: "Presidential Campaign Songs, 1789-1996," available from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. The songs are performed by the veteran folk artist Oscar Brand, and they are not only instructive, but a sheer delight.

Given the confines of a single compact disc, there is no room for the losers; only winning candidates are represented here (with the exception of Henry Wallace;

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folkies—being lefties—cannot help themselves). The songs are rich and varied. They are uplifting, obnoxious, tender, wicked, hilarious, and probably libelous. Many of them use popular tunes (such as "Yankee Doodle"); some were written by noted composers (such as Stephen Foster—for James Buchanan). So numerous were the ditties composed for political campaigns that parties would publish whole books of them, for a single political year (as in, *The Republican Songster for the Campaign of 1860*).

We begin at the beginning: with George Washington, who had no opponent but who had songs nonetheless, including one that goes, "The day is broke, my lads! March on, and follow, follow Washington." John Adams's entry stresses his friendship with the great man, the first president. Jefferson's is in a minor key—it is a typical Scottish reel—and its words dramatically oppose the Alien and Sedition Acts, promising that "the reign of terror now is o'er," and continuing, "Rejoice, sons of Columbia! To tyrants never bend the knee. Join with heart, with soul and voice, for Jefferson and liberty."

These first presidential songs, unsurprisingly, remembered the Revolution—the patriots dying, and so on. They were also pointedly anti-faction. Monroe's anthem includes the line, "Oh, say, sovereign people, whose voice is the law; whose will is supreme and keeps faction in awe!"

■

These are American sounds, in all their strange and cantankerous glory.

■

Care for some negative campaigning? Try John Quincy Adams's "Little Know Ye"—another Scottish reel, menacing and relentless—which warns of all the bad things that will happen "if John Quincy not be comin'": "Slavery's comin', knavery's comin', plunder's comin', wonder's comin', hatin''s comin', Satan's comin' [yes, you read that right]—if John Quincy not be comin'."

One of the most entertaining and derogatory of all these songs is that for Martin Van Buren in 1836. Using a beloved lullaby, it mocks the candidate's opponents, William Henry Harrison (Tippecanoe) and John Tyler, drawing particular attention to the old general's . . . thirst: "Rockabye, Baby, Daddy's a Whig; when he comes home, hard cider he'll swig. When he has swug, he'll fall in a stew; and down will come Tyler and Tippecanoe." (It gets worse—and more uproarious.)

Harrison, though, fired back with a song of his own, of which the killer stanza is, "Who rules us with an iron rod? Who moves at Satan's beck and nod? Who heeds not man, who heeds not God? Van Buren!"

Millard Fillmore's entry begins, "There's right and wrong in parties, and right is on our side." Our thirteenth

... in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1789

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president was a divider, not a uniter.

"Lincoln and Liberty, Too" states that "Our David's good sling is unerring, the slave-o-crat giant he slew. So shout if you're freedom-preferring, for Lincoln and liberty, too." "Grant, Grant, Grant" (set to the tune of "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp") lambastes Andrew Johnson for being too soft on the South, taunting, "Goodbye, Andy, you must go. For to Grant, a traitor is ever a foe." (Furthermore, "We all will cheer the happy news, and the Ku Klux Klan will shiver in their shoes.")

Twelve years later, Garfield, too, played on fears of southern ascension. His "If the Johnnies Get into Power," sung to the tune of "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," warns, "Our laws they'll jeer, our flag they'll flout; they'll try to turn our officers out. And we'll all wear gray if the Johnnies get into power."

Grover Cleveland's song, "Democrats, Good Democrats," stokes resentment over the Stolen Election of 1876 ("Eight years ago, we won the prize, and then were robbed by tricks and lies"). Benjamin Harrison's ditty makes vicious sport of Cleveland's conduct in the Civil War (he arranged for a substitute); no Republican even *thought* to say anything so harsh about Bill Clinton in 1992.

And so the collection progresses into the 20th century, finishing with "Don't Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow)." The entry for 1924, "Keep Cool and Keep Coolidge," celebrates that president's humility and simplicity. The message of Herbert Hoover's song is fixed right in the title: "If He's Good Enough for Lindy [the aviator Charles Lindbergh], He's Good Enough for Me." (A rule in politics: If you have the nation's foremost endorsement, flaunt it.) Jimmy Carter's ballad for 1976 asks the governor's none-too-modest question, "Why Not the Best?"

At the end of his second inaugural address, Ronald Reagan spoke of the "American sound." Well, these are American sounds, in all their strange and cantankerous glory. They are not as lofty as the abstraction that Reagan described; but they make our politics sweeter—and more lovable—all the same. **NR**

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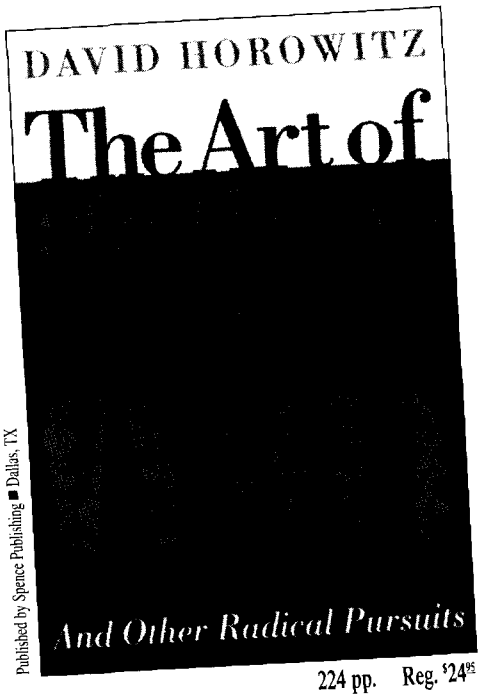

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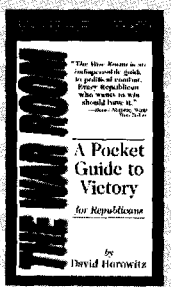

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■ COVER STORY ■

Liberals from the Lost Lagoon

In L.A., a convention of retreads

JONAH GOLDBERG

WHEN the Democratic convention's most popular speaker—Jesse Jackson—declared that George W. Bush "wants to give the surplus back to the richest 20 percent to buy more yachts," our Ouija boards should have started to shake. When Maxine Waters acted as a kingmaker, declaring that vice-presidential nominee Joe Lieberman "knows what he has to say," we should have loaded up on garlic and holy water. And when Lieberman actually fell into a trance and did her bidding, there was simply no doubt left: The Old Democratic Party had risen from the dead.

President Clinton, so often praised for leading politics in a "New Democrat" direction, no longer has much use for the Democratic party. In his convention speech, he was content to put the "me" in "messiah" and leave it there. As viewers saw him walk through the tunnels underneath the Staples Center like a drunken Shriner looking for the men's room, the convention's producers flashed across the bottom of the TV screen various statistics—22 million new jobs created, record homeownership, etc.—that could be associated with his presidency. Not since Elvis Presley leapt on stage in a karate gi to the tune of "Kung Fu Fighting" has there been a more self-indulgent entrance.

But now that Clinton's leaving, it's becoming clear that the retreads managed to wait him out—and that the real test of Al Gore's leadership will be whether he can stand up to the Democratic party Bill Clinton manhandled for eight years. Judging from the convention, he's got his work cut out for him.

Ted Kennedy by Ismael Roldan

The clearest sign was Tuesday evening, unofficially called "liberal night" (though, in reality, every night was liberal night), owing to the fact that so many dashboard saints of the asinine Left were featured. Delegates got their red meat—or whatever the acceptable term on the left is these days. Kate Michelman, who believes life begins when the mother gives her baby a name, or perhaps car keys, denounced the extremism of George W. Bush. Jackson spoke out of TV's prime time, but, as he told reporters, "Whenever I speak, it's prime time."

As expected, Jackson busted some rhymes, condemning what he called the "inclusion illusion" of the GOP convention in Philadelphia and bragging about the L.A. convention as the "real deal." "There are one thousand union workers here. One thousand African Americans. One thousand Latinos and Asian Americans. As many women as men."

Of course, what Jackson left out while reading the recipe for this ethnic cocktail was that the Democratic National Committee enforces one of the most absolutist quota regimes in America. For example, the DNC strongly "recommends" that large state delegations be composed of 50 percent women, 26 percent Latinos, 16 percent blacks, 9 percent Asian-Pacific islanders, 10 percent homosexuals (half lesbians, half gay men), etc. It was this sort of quota-mongering that got Mamie Cunningham kicked out of the Mississippi delegation. A former "Freedom Democrat" barred from the 1964 delegation because of her race, she was barred from the 2000 one because there were two more women among Mississippi's delegates than the quota permitted. (At the last minute, another woman volunteered to give up her place to Cunningham.)

This quota silliness is dictated by the "McGovern rules" that Jesse Jackson helped impose on the Democrats in 1972. Asked about these "reforms," McGovern himself once said that he opened the doors to the Democratic party and "20 million people walked out." Perhaps this explains why the Democrats have managed to earn more than 50 percent of the vote only once in the last 35 years. (In 1976, Carter received 50.06 percent.) At the presidential level, the Democratic party is, simply, a rump party.

Bill Clinton used Reagan-Democrat rhetoric to become the first Democratic president to be elected to two terms in more than half a century. It seemed at least possible that he had helped his party break the curse; but the true test comes now. After watching the long-toothed liberal monsters cavorting around Los Angeles like Hieronymus Bosch figures, one finds it hard to believe that Gore can pull off the same trick.

The lefties have already gotten to Joe Lieberman. When the senator—head of the Democratic Leadership Council—was tapped for the vice presidency, he was an exemplary New

Mr. Goldberg is editor of National Review Online (www.nationalreview.com).

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Democrat. He explicitly rejected quotas, and supported Social Security privatization, Medicare reform, and school vouchers. The dinosaurs, led by Maxine Waters, rebelled—and within ten days Lieberman had renounced his old beliefs and sworn fealty to the old ways like a victim of medieval rack torture.

The Democrats are clearly less enamored of "new ideas" than we had been led to believe—which is interesting in light of all the liberal taunts about the GOP's supposed unhealthy obsession with Reagan.

Still, if the Republicans are behind the times, the L.A. Democrats might as well have dressed in bearskins and used stone knives (and I think some of them did). After all, Reagan nostalgia attaches mostly to timeless themes, such as limited government, deregulation, and equal opportunity (as opposed to equal results).

■

If the Republicans are behind the times, the L.A. Democrats might as well have dressed in bearskins and used stone knives.

■

Liberal nostalgia, however, presents a real problem, because it attaches itself to real-life programs that *are* antiquated. It's the difference between loving cars and refusing to accept that your old Studebaker can't get out of the driveway. Gore wouldn't even take the Democratic clunker in for an oil change. For example, when Social Security was introduced, there were 42 workers for every retiree and life expectancy was 61. By 2029, there will be two workers per retiree and life expectancy will soon hit 80, even without further medical breakthroughs. And yet Gore refuses to accept that FDR's old clunker simply isn't up to the task anymore. "I will never agree to raise the retirement age to 70 or threaten the promise of Social Security," he declared. All of his lines are about "defending" and "protecting" his favorite programs, by putting them in things like "iron-clad lockboxes," where they will remain invulnerable to reasonable and necessary reform. At the convention, Gore even broke with the "mend it, don't end it" affirmative-action formulation of Bill Clinton; he merely promised to "defend" affirmative action.

When asked on *Meet the Press* whether pregnant women on death row should be executed, Gore relied on party dogma, saying that the mother's "choice" should prevail. Within days, Congress unanimously rejected that position. On the stump, Gore shouts that he will "Never!" sign an antilabor bill. He will "Never!" sign a bill abridging the right to abortion. He will "Never!" let anyone touch benefits for the elderly. He will "Never!" moderate his support of affirmative action, his position on school vouchers, etc. For a guy who promises "revolutionary change," isn't this an awful lot to yell "Never!" about?

To the extent that such promises are rooted in anything beyond cynical fear-mongering, rote pandering, and reactionary liberalism, they stem from the ossification of the Democratic mind. As John Kenneth Galbraith said, "Few things are as immutable as the addiction of political groups to the ideas by which they have won office." Liberals today are so married to their past successes that they see any alteration in the status quo as a crisis. When Florida governor Jeb Bush instituted a program that resulted in *higher* minority enrollment in colleges and universities, the black establishment staged a sit-in in his office and sang "We Shall Overcome." NAACP president Kweisi Mfume called the change the return of "Jim Crow." Civil-rights leaders compared Bush to George Wallace.

This entrenched pathology of denial manifested itself throughout the convention. New Democrats with new ideas suffered at the expense of Old Democrats with old ideas. Sen. Bill Bradley, who could bore the birds out of the trees, cemented his retread status by not merely giving *a* tired paleo-liberal speech, but the *same* tired paleo-liberal speech he's been giving for over a year. His remarks numbed the audience and pushed Harold Ford Jr., the ostensibly New Democrat keynoter, out of prime time. More tellingly, whenever Gore or Lieberman struck centrist chords—citing welfare reform or the Gulf War—you could almost hear crickets chirping in the Staples Center. But when pols promised to raise the minimum wage, or when Jesse Jackson suggested that the Republican yacht subsidy be spent on reparations for slavery, the crowd went wild.

Robert Nisbet once wrote that nostalgia "is, even at best, the rust of memory, often a disease." Well, the Staples Center might as well have been a petri dish for the nostalgia bug. It was easy to lose count, for example, of the speakers who mentioned that it was in L.A., 40 years ago, that JFK was nominated. The problem with nostalgic sentiment is that it disfigures and overwhelms reality, and that's why this deification of Kennedy is particularly ironic. JFK, not that successful a president in the first place, was significant largely because he was to the right of most Republicans on economics and foreign policy. His positions were well to the right of his eventual successor, Richard Nixon, who after all created the EPA and codified affirmative action. If the Democrats were truly "about the issues," one might expect them to distance themselves from an icon who would have been disgusted by their gooey liberalism, and to embrace Nixon, who made their favorite programs bipartisan. Indeed, during convention week, Gore Vidal (no less) sat on a panel of leftists and explained that JFK hated liberals but got along fine with conservatives. The audience, naturally, was flummoxed.

But don't tell *Ted* Kennedy any of this. If there is a patron saint of Democratic retreads, also-rans, woulda-couldas, and if-onlys, it is the irrepressible senior senator from Massachusetts. Perhaps his biggest applause line was, "I've been a Democrat all my life—and I am proud of it"—as if this were a sign of great fortitude and perseverance. And perhaps it is.

By all accounts, Al Gore needed to do two things at the Democratic convention. First, he needed to distance himself from "one of history's greatest presidents." Second, he had to make people like him in the process. It's too early to tell if he fully succeeded at either. (The most recent polls show him receiving almost exactly the same convention bounce that Bob Dole had in 1996, which evaporated entirely within a few weeks.) But if he did succeed in paddling away from the narcissistic island that is Bill Clinton, he may have done so only by getting pulled into the undertow of the Old Democratic Party. If that's the case, then Clinton's greatest legacy will have been to leave the Democratic party exactly as he found it. **NR**

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The Gore Straddle

Clintonian policies, lefty rhetoric

RAMESH PONNURU

On the face of it, Al Gore appears to have taken a sharp turn to the left at the Democratic convention. He vowed to pass the Kyoto global-warming accords, a major provision of which has already been rejected 95–0 by the Senate. He spoke more about how he would regulate trade than about how he would free it. Where President Clinton had promised to "mend" affirmative action, Gore said only that he would "defend" it. Since the defeat of the Clintons' health-care plan in 1994, Democrats have said that they would pursue "health-care reform" step by step. Gore made it clear that the end point of reform was "universal health coverage"—i.e., national health insurance. He also came out for universal preschool. In 1996, Clinton opened the door a crack for school vouchers. Gore slammed it shut, saying he would oppose "any plan" that sent tax revenues to private schools.

As Gore told it, trade unions are more important to America's future than the rising stock market. "I'm happy that the stock market has boomed and so many businesses and new enterprises have done well," he said. "This country is richer and stronger. But my focus is on working families—people trying to make house payments and car payments, working overtime to save for college and do right by their kids." Later in the speech, Gore told a success story about how administration policies had helped a woman leave welfare and become "a proud member of I.B.E.W. Local 288." This is not a campaign for the New Economy. Gore is moving leftward, and backward: Add some attacks on "economic royalists" and take out the defense of abortion and the coded appeals to gays and lesbians, and his father could have given that speech 60 years ago.

■

This is not a campaign for the New Economy. Gore is moving leftward, and backward.

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New Democrats would disagree with this assessment. They would probably note that Gore also came out in his speech for targeted tax cuts and demanded further reductions in crime; that he boasted of his support for the Gulf War; that he talked about reducing the national debt rather than spending the surplus; that he continues to support the death penalty and

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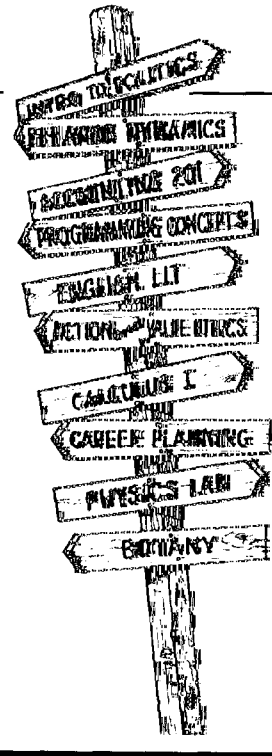

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missile defense. All true. But these positions highlight the perversity of Gore's political strategy: He is selling mostly Clintonian policies with the rhetoric of an unreconstructed liberal.

Clintonian policies are not always moderate. Clinton and Gore have never been interested in reforming budget-busting entitlements or racial preferences, as many New Democrats are. Nor will they brook compromise on abortion, the cause dearest to the hearts of the convention delegates. But these are defensive positions. Where Gore proposes departures from the status quo, those departures tend toward the tepid.

Roberto Schmidt

His promise to stand up to the NRA consists, in the first instance, of an end to the so-called "gun-show loophole." The law as it stands requires background checks when gun dealers make a sale, but not when gun collectors who aren't in the business do. Collectors can do this at their homes or at gun shows, and Democrats want to restrict their ability to do so anywhere. This is picayune stuff.

Ditto for Gore's "patient's bill of rights." Gore is not proposing to transform the way health care is delivered. He would not eliminate rationing by HMOs. He's just throwing sand in the gears, reducing the efficiency of their rationing by regulating them and exposing them to lawsuits. Making the debate even more trivial is that Republicans, including George W. Bush, have their own proposal to regulate HMOs, a proposal that leans less heavily on litigation. So Gore is reduced to calling for a "*real*, enforceable patient's bill of rights," leaving the details unspecified.

The political appeal of these sorts of proposals is that they sound sensible. Most people will support them, or at least accept them. The political drawback is that these proposals stir the passions of no one. Clinton was nonetheless able to give Democratic partisans and independent voters a reason to feel they had a stake in electing him. For the partisans, he was able to promise to end the Republican lock on the White House (in 1992) and to stave off Newt Gingrich (in 1996). For the independent voters, he was an acceptable alternative to Republicans who were hopelessly out of touch (in both years).

Without a Gingrich or a Dole to work with, Gore has not been able to generate enthusiasm for his candidacy in either group. Liberals are tired of the discipline of the last eight years. It seems unnecessary now that the budget is in surplus and the Religious Right no longer menacing. If Gore frustrates them, they can always flirt with Ralph Nader, or riot in the streets. In George W. Bush, meanwhile, Republicans have found a candidate whom both conservatives and the public at large can support.

Gore, then, had to find a way to make a politics of lowered visions seem exciting. For several months this year, he attempted to achieve this goal by YELLING A LOT. His new tack is to borrow the melodramatic rhetoric of politicians to his left. In his speech, he talked about the "powerful forces" that oppress "working families," and how he would "fight" the former on behalf of the latter. The convention as a whole exhibited the same bifurcation as Gore's speech: The speakers (Jesse Jackson, John Sweeney, Elizabeth Birch, etc.) were more liberal than the written platform.

The disjunction between Gore's policies and his rhetoric is jarring. If corporate power is so oppressive, Gore should have been with the protesters outside his convention—or should at least be trying to break up Time Warner. In 1992, the late Herbert Stein wrote of Paul Tsongas's grandiloquent pamphlet *A Call to Economic Arms*, "This is the voice of Henry V at Agincourt or Winston Churchill during the Battle of Britain rallying America to a cause whose main ingredients include saving aluminum cans and raising the gasoline tax." Something similar could be said of Gore.

Gore's new approach carries several risks. One is that voters may not recognize themselves in his portrait of helpless victims of corporate malefaction. His implied distinction between participants in the stock market and "working families" ignores reality: These days, the market is the means by which many of those families "save for college and do right by their kids." In today's economy, there may not be enough resentment to sustain Gore's kind of liberalism.

Gore declared, "I am not satisfied." But most people *are* satisfied. They detect no crisis that politicians have to address. Gore promises to fight for them. But they think politicians do too much fighting as it is. Gov. Bush's campaign skillfully exploits this sentiment by ignoring divisive issues and denouncing partisanship. The implicit promise of Bush's campaign is that if he is elected, no one will ever hear from Washington again. Whatever else one thinks of what Bush is selling, it must be conceded that there's a public demand for it.

Bill Clinton has played no small role in creating today's antipolitical environment: His soothing persona, his trivial politics, his scandals have all contributed to it. In this placid political era, Republicans would never dream of making a frontal assault on the welfare state. The taming of the Republicans must be counted as Clinton's biggest political success. But a pacified polity is not one that Gore can easily rile up. So he may be the final victim of Clinton's success. **NR**

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The Republican Challenge

Now is the time for all good men . . .

CHARLES R. KESLER

THE party's nominee mentioned the party's name twice in his acceptance speech, each time in the context of bipartisan cooperation. In this respect, George W. Bush's party resembles his father's: Republicans of all ages find it hard to speak up for their party and its principles.

Think back over recent presidential campaigns. Bob Dole boasted repeatedly that he hadn't read the Republican platform he was supposed to be running on. President Bush called conspicuously for a "kinder, gentler" America, implying that it would be an improvement over Ronald Reagan's. Even the Great Communicator didn't seem to take a lot of pride in being a Republican. A former Democrat himself, he liked to tell voters that "I didn't leave my party, and we're not suggesting you leave yours." It was "the leadership of the Democratic party" that had left him, declared Reagan, and so he called on the "millions of patriotic Democrats in this country who believe in freedom" to join him in his partisan exile.

Isn't there a positive good in being a Republican? You wouldn't guess it from what past Republican officeholders had to say about themselves. Ever since the New Deal, the GOP has been tarred as the party of the few, the "economic royalists." The problem is not simply that the Democrats inveigled a majority of the voters into believing this; the deeper problem is that they bamboozled many Republicans into believing it about themselves. The GOP not only lost the moral high ground; it forgot why it had ever held it.

Yet it is surely true that this is "not your father's Republican party." A younger generation of Republicans in their thirties, forties, and fifties is rising to prominence, neatly symbolized by George W. Bush's presidential candidacy. Far removed from the Great Depression and even the civil-rights battles of the 1950s and early '60s, these Republicans remember the Reagan administration proudly. They don't feel guilty about being Republicans. But neither, it must be said, do they seem all that enthusiastic about it. After all, when the Evil Empire collapsed, so too did the most urgent reason for passionate loyalty to the GOP. Once the focus returned to domestic policy, many Republican politicians felt vulnerable to new charges of hardheartedness (specifically, the crime of being associated with Newt Gingrich). The Republican governors, including George W. Bush, rushed into this domestic-policy vacuum, and—in a pragmatic, bipartisan spirit—enacted impressive reforms in the states and even inspired some at the national level.

Whatever the virtues of bipartisanship, renewing the GOP's partisan pride is not one of them. The Republican party still lacks a confident, well-grounded sense of itself and its moral purpose; something deeper and more enduring than a tactical zigzag away from Gingrichism, something less personal than affection for Ronald Reagan. Hardly anyone alive remembers when the GOP was the majority party, or why it was. But Republicans have to recapture that experience, and express it in today's idiom.

Republicans like to invoke their legacy as "the party of Lincoln." This is boilerplate, to be sure, but it has the potential to be much more than that. Bush and the new generation of GOP officeholders face an electorate whose suspicion of Republicans is increasingly hollow or pro forma, matched and often exceeded by a suspicion of Democrats. These voters are far removed from the New Deal, Vietnam, and Watergate; they offer Bush an opportunity both to give content to his "compassionate conservatism" and to reclaim the moral high ground for his party, with a new politics in the Lincoln tradition.

BUSH AND THE PARTY OF LINCOLN

The original Lincoln Republicans stood for liberty and Union, in the form of popular, constitutional government. Liberty meant that all human beings were created free and equal; slavery was therefore wrong. Union meant that out of many individuals, an indivisible people had been formed; secession was therefore wrong. Popular, constitutional government meant that government had to be limited, and to operate with the consent of the governed; tyranny, whether of a majority or a minority, was therefore wrong.

Under Lincoln, the Union defeated slavery and secession. But the party of Lincoln didn't stop there. Republicans applied these principles to virtually every area of public policy after the Civil War. They passed the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution; the first national civil-rights acts; the Homestead Act; laws stimulating railroad construction and manufactures, in order to draw together the diverse parts of the Union; and measures to build a modern Army and Navy, not to mention the Panama Canal. They embraced a modest federal role in education—directing resources to the states through the land-grant colleges—and supported increased local funding for primary and secondary schools.

The Republicans, of course, made mistakes. In Gov. Bush's words, "the party of Lincoln has not always carried the mantle of Lincoln." But by and large, the American people awarded the Republicans the political high ground because they were convinced of the Republicans' definition of that high ground and of their worthiness to hold it. As a result, the GOP dominated politics from the end of the Civil War to the beginning of the New Deal—almost three-quarters of a century, during which only two Democrats managed to reach the presidency.

It would be a mistake to attempt to deduce present-day policies from such broad historical precedents. Arthur Larson

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tried this in a couple of books in the 1950s, and his contention—that Eisenhower's Modern Republicanism was a suitably updated version of Lincoln's own—was dubious. But it is not overreaching to suggest a general affinity between the spirit of Bush's proposed reforms and the historic principles of the GOP.

Tax cuts and Social Security reform, for example, advance the cause of individual liberty. Military modernization and missile defense promote a strong Union. "Prosperity with a purpose" affirms that the nation is more than the sum of its parts, that national unity has a moral dimension. (Incidentally, the platform's support for individual—not group—rights underscores the connections among personal liberty, national unity, and democracy, though Bush so far has downplayed this point.) The governor's plan to "rally the armies of compassion" seeks, without abandoning individualism, to strengthen the intermediate institutions (families, communities, charities) that help to bridge the gap between individual and nation. Even his education reforms might be described as a reinvigoration of traditional Republican efforts.

GWB, RR, DDE, and Abe, by Ismael Roldan

Rather than allow "compassionate conservatism" to be seen as a response to (or, worse, an imitation of) Clinton's Third Way, Bush could insist that his program is grounded squarely in the principles of the party of Lincoln. This would help both to dignify his program and to advertise the honorable heritage of his party. After all, in politics it's essential to connect oneself to the people's understanding of their country, to the patriotic history that explains a nation's origins and destiny. That's what political parties are about, at least partly, in America; they are mirrors of history and principle that allow us to recognize, and thus prepare to govern, ourselves. Therefore it's essential for the aspiring American statesman to give an account of his relation not only to the Founding, but also to the Civil War and to the crises of the 20th century, because these later episodes illuminate the meaning of the principles of the Founding.

Invoking Lincoln, then, if done imaginatively, may help Bush to exploit the political opportunity confronting him, though it would be only the beginning of the narrative account he needs. More important, however, is that Lincoln's legacy adds moral, political, and historical ballast to compassionate conservatism. Without this ballast, Bush's rhetoric and programs may well hurry the party onto the rocks that have wrecked it before.

THE WHIG TEMPTATION

Without a clear, rigorous appreciation of Lincoln's principles, the Republican party usually succumbs to one of two temptations. Let's call them the Whig Temptation and the Progressive Temptation, after the two political parties with the closest historical associations with the GOP—the party from whose ruins it emerged in the mid 19th century, and the party that split off from it in 1912.

The Whig Temptation arises from perceived weakness. Its state of mind is defeatist, its cast of mind forlornly aristocratic. It is resigned to the permanent minority status of the Republicans and, like the Whigs groaning under the supremacy of the Jacksonian Democrats, tends to regard the people, that is, the majority of the American electorate, as a lost cause, so easily misled or so decadent that to try to enlighten them is almost hopeless. Oh, the GOP might win an isolated election or two, particularly if it runs a war hero (e.g., Eisenhower) or an ex-Democrat (e.g., Reagan), but basically the Whigged-out GOP does not trust the people, who have disappointed it time and again. In their political prescriptions, therefore, Whiggish Republicans either take a dispirited, "me too" approach or bravely proclaim liberty over equality, and emphasize the need to check the people—to trust property, courts, or culture rather than popular consent as the ultimate guardian of decent American politics.

The Republican party was beaten into Whiggishness during and after the New Deal. Today, the party is less Whiggish and more populist than it used to be, but many cultural conservatives remain Whigs, believing with Paul Weyrich that politics is a lost cause (at least for the foreseeable future), or with Robert Bork that everything good is a lost cause (and has been, ever since the Declaration of Independence).

Among latter-day Whigs are many libertarians and economic conservatives, too. The latter often regard democracy merely as a cost of doing business; an annoyance imposed by the losers on the winners in our society. Many libertarians join with them in believing that the courts, if only better appointments could be made, would save us from the democratic excesses of legislators and bureaucrats. Alas, better judges won't be appointed unless more and better Republicans are elected. And that will require sharper debates within the party and sharper arguments before the public—the very forms of persuasion that Whiggism rejects as hopeless.

The party of Lincoln shared the Whigs' fear of popular tyranny, but the Republicans refused to give up on "government of the people, by the people, for the people." The original Republicans defended constitutional or limited government as the perfection of popular government, not its opposite. But they knew that this committed them to a politics of statesmanship, of persuading the people to do the right thing. Lincoln's example showed that this was possible. Loyal Republicans try to follow his example, and Reagan's too. Whigs don't.

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THE PROGRESSIVE TEMPTATION

The Progressive temptation, by contrast, emerges from a certain kind of perceived political strength. Its state of mind is highly overconfident, its cast of mind exaggeratedly democratic. Two varieties of Republican Progressivism have flickered across our recent history, each a brilliant but instructive failure—Newt Gingrich's and John McCain's.

Gingrich's Progressivism was straightforward—all that talk of the Third Wave, the economic-technological revolution that was transforming American politics. He was a kind of reverse Marxist, sharing the belief in a form of economic determinism but drawing the opposite conclusion about the end (or at least the next stage) of history, which would be, he thought, not Communist but entrepreneurial-capitalist. What was important, politically, was to be on the right side of history, and he viewed his own prodigious accomplishments as accelerating the collapse of Second Wave, bureaucratic, New Deal–style politics and ushering in a new era of "demassification" and freedom.

This is a far cry from Lincoln's plea to turn back the clock, to recover our "ancient faith" in natural human freedom and equality. It is also far removed from reverence for the Constitution, that old-fashioned, First Wave parchment. Gingrich was not standing athwart history, yelling Stop; he was mounted on history, yelling Giddyap. His was not a politics of persuasion, because he assumed that in the decisive sense the people didn't need to be persuaded; their views would eventually reflect history's dictates, and history was on the side of freedom. He was nonplussed when the people repudiated him, not President Clinton, in their several showdowns. When history finally threw him, Gingrich fell hard.

John McCain's was a different sort of Progressive temptation. He didn't share Gingrich's wild, Wilsonian confidence in the inevitable triumph of the forward-looking party, in this case, the Republicans. McCain's Progressivism centered not on where the party was going but on how to get there; not on ends but on means. His hero was Theodore Roosevelt, and like his hero, McCain wanted to purify democracy by reforming its procedures. Even as T.R. in 1912 charged off in the direction of direct democracy, so McCain rode out after campaign-finance reform. Each thought his so-called reform indispensable to political health, the sine qua non of all further political progress.

McCain's vagueness, therefore, on the goals of his "new patriotism" makes sense. He embraced "creative destruction" because the destruction of the current campaign-finance system (and the Republican party associated with it) was necessary before anything creative could be accomplished. Once self-interest had been purged from politics, disinterested patriotism would bloom and pure democracy could be achieved. And what would pure democracy do? Well, whatever.

Although T.R. and McCain differed on the cure, they agreed on the diagnosis: The American people had lost control of their government to the special interests. In appealing to the Republican party to smite the interests and restore democracy, McCain and T.R. thought they were following in the best tradition of Lincoln, who had, in his day, saved the Union from the special interests of cotton and slavery. But McCain, like T.R., was wrong, and for the same two reasons.

First, McCain neglected the Constitution and the Republican habit of venerating it. It was bad enough that his campaign-finance proposals could not be squared with the First Amendment. Even worse, he didn't acknowledge that nowadays the national government itself is by far the largest and most dangerous special interest, whose power over the election of its own members—our representatives—would have been increased by these proposals. McCain doesn't clearly distinguish between today's Big Government (with its centralized administration and vast bureaucratic domain) and the limited, constitutional, yet energetic government of the Republican tradition.

Second, it is utopian to identify self-interestedness as an evil that must be eliminated or expelled if our politics is ever to be decent. Republican politics seeks to moderate and elevate self-interest, to persuade citizens to see how self-interest and duty coincide. It does not war on self-interest in the name of disinterested virtue, because that would endanger freedom as well as decency and because, in fact, virtue is not completely disinterested: Virtue is good for us.

So far in his campaign, Gov. Bush hasn't invoked Lincoln very much, and probably doesn't need to in order to win the election. But once elected, if he wishes to avoid the likely decline of compassionate conservatism into either Whiggism or Progressivism, he may want to reconsider Lincoln's example and precepts. And if Bush is ambitious not merely to win the presidency but to rehabilitate his party for the long run—to restore it to majority status—he will have to repair, eventually, to the proud legacy of the party of Lincoln. **NR**

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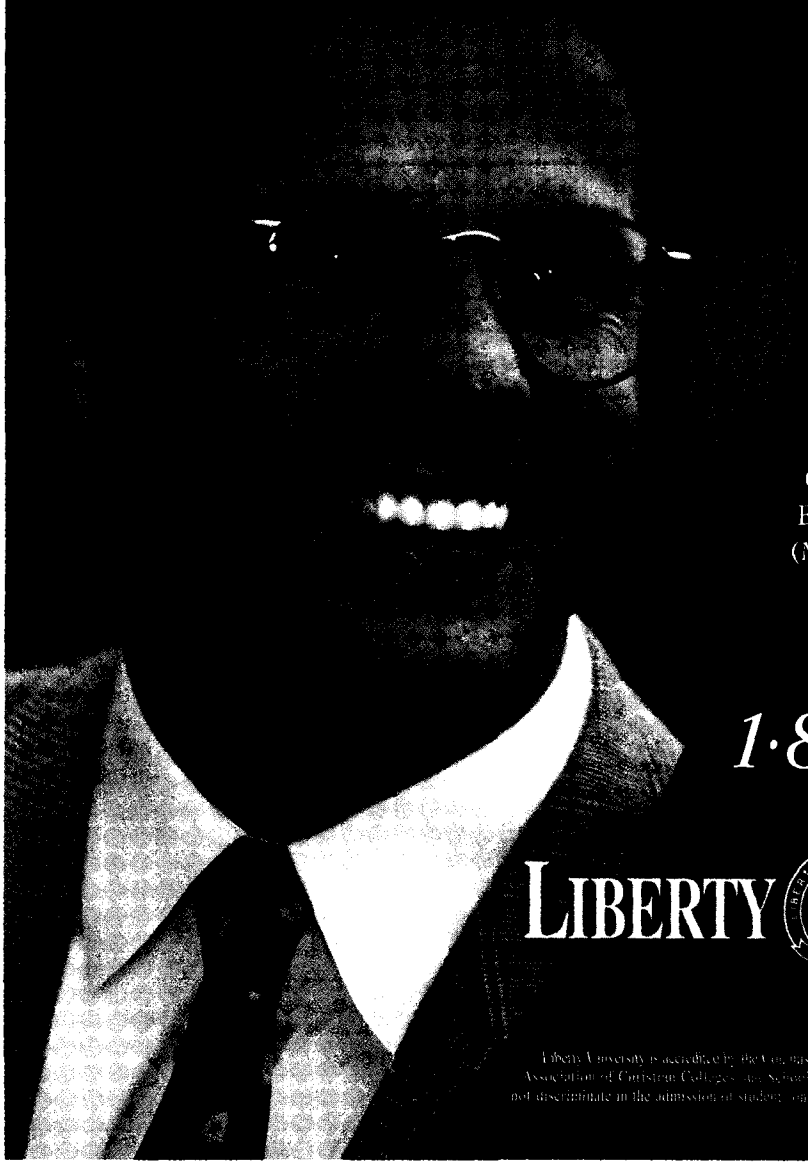

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Testing and Its Enemies

At the schoolhouse barricades

ABIGAIL THERNSTROM

In her recently published autobiography, Brenda Webster describes going to New York's pricey and progressive Dalton School. "To learn grammar," she writes, "we sat in a circle and imagined what part of speech we would have invented first if we were cavemen. . . . This was fun, but when I graduated from high school [in 1954] I still had no idea where to place a comma."

No wonder educational backlash has finally set in. The ideas that animated progressive education spread far and wide, and they are far from dead; many teachers still seem to think that learning grammar stifles creativity. But across the nation, states are now insisting that students know where to place that comma.

Every state except Iowa has established academic standards in at least some subjects, and 44 have standards in the core academic disciplines (English, math, history, and science). Forty-eight have statewide testing programs, and most have aligned the tests to the standards in at least one subject. By 2003, according to current plans, students in 26 states will not graduate without passing a statewide test. Thirteen states and a number of school districts have also gotten tough about grade promotion.

Seemingly great news, but, alas, the Fordham Foundation estimates that only eight states and the District of Columbia have acceptable standards in all four subjects. The rest have "mediocre to miserable expectations for their students"—perhaps worse than no standards at all. And while 40 states are issuing report cards on schools, very few are actually rewarding those that do well. In fact, in many districts, it pays to be a lousy school, since poor performance earns extra money.

Nevertheless, the states are stumbling in the right direction—over the loud objections of some of the nation's leading educational lights. Deborah Meier—recipient of a MacArthur "genius"

Abigail Thernstrom is a senior fellow of the Manhattan Institute and serves on the state board of education in Massachusetts. She is working on a new (co-authored) book: *Getting the Answers Right: The Racial Gap in Academic Achievement and How to Close It.*

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award, and the much-celebrated founder of schools in New York and Boston—has plenty of company in wanting "life scores based on living." Theodore Sizer, former dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, views "the myriad, detailed and mandatory state 'curriculum frameworks,' of whatever scholarly brilliance" as "attacks on intellectual freedom." High-stakes tests just "compound the felony."

Jonathan Kozol, a man with many fans in the world of education and beyond, is positively apoplectic on the subject. Statewide tests, he says, force "scripted journeys, where there is no room for whimsical discoveries and unexpected learnings." They evoke memories of "another social order not so long ago that regimented all its children . . . to march with pedagogic uniformity, efficiency, and every competence one can conceive—except for independent will—right into Poland, Austria, and France, and World War II." (Mysteriously, France—with its own "pedagogic uniformity"—managed to avoid having such a pernicious social order.)

■

The states are stumbling in the right direction—over the loud objections of some leading educational lights.

■

The views of Meier, Sizer, and Kozol are echoed by many teachers, parents, and students, whose voices the press seems eager to record. Their complaints seldom vary. "Standardize tests, standardize class, then standardize my mind!" Tests "do not measure creativity, music and artistic ability, ethics, human relationships, or independent thinking." "The fact that a child's future should be determined by knowing or not knowing certain dates or formulas is ridiculous and unfair."

Columnists and op-ed writers, too, are often part of the chorus of critics. Richard Rothstein, who writes on education for the *New York Times*, acknowledges that test scores are rising, but cautions: "More teenagers have fatty diets . . . adolescent obesity has soared.

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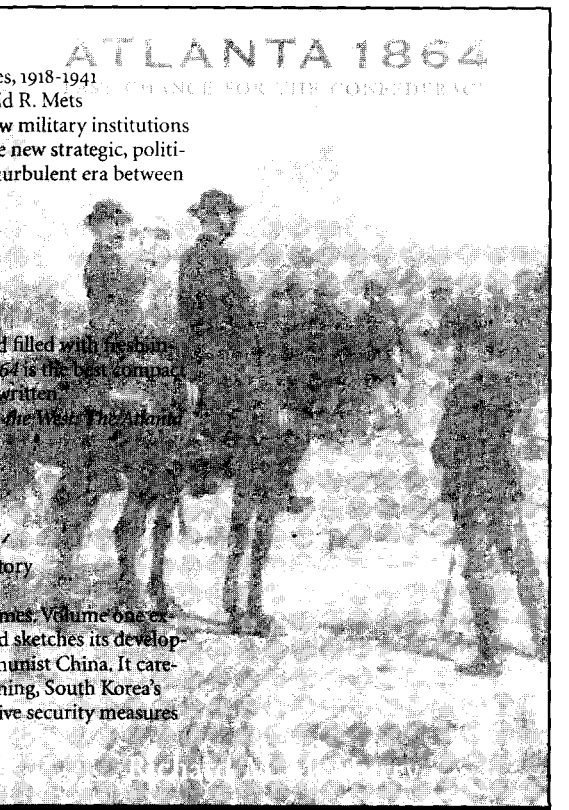

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Neither children nor our economy will prosper if graduates have higher scores, but are overweight, with poor exercise habits or irresponsible sexual behavior."

Maybe the readers of the *Times* lap up such material, but in general the public isn't buying. Eighty-three percent of parents (according to Public Agenda's nonpartisan polling) want standards, and 78 percent agree that children who don't know their stuff should not be promoted to the next grade. Roughly the same percentage favor high-stakes tests, and 63 percent believe inner-city youngsters should be held to the same standards as those in well-to-do suburbs.

But here's the rub: Standards (parents assume) mean minimum basic skills. Nothing fancy. And while they want high-stakes testing, fully half oppose using one test to decide promotion or graduation. The states that have a high-school exit exam thus have their work cut out for them. They all provide multiple opportunities to retake the test, but 50 percent of parents seem to want something more: alternative ways of assessing the students who don't pass, standards with exceptions. And that spells trouble ahead.

Parental doubts will only increase as the high-stakes tests kick in. "When parents start to realize their [child] . . . may not get a high-school diploma, more and more people will start raising their voices," a Massachusetts history teacher predicted in June. He is probably right. Failure rates have been high in his state. Last year, half the tenth-graders did not pass the statewide math test, while a third flunked English. These will become exit exams in 2001, although students will have numerous chances to retake the test before the end of twelfth grade.

The overall numbers are bad; those for black and Hispanic students are tragic. Across Massachusetts, 80 percent of non-Asian minority students failed the tenth-grade math assessment. Fifty-seven percent flunked English. And Massachusetts is not unique: The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) data describe a nationwide catastrophe. On average, black 17-year-olds are performing at the same level as (or below) white 13-year-olds. The Hispanic picture is the same or only slightly better, depending on the subject tested.

Civil-rights activists frequently charge that high-stakes tests are discriminatory and punitive. They "have a very large cost for people who are politically powerless," argues Gary Orfield of Harvard's Graduate School of Education. "If we take kids who are getting a bad education and coming from a situation of social crisis and then make them unemployable in the process, we are not helping them or their communities." The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund has already been in court trying (unsuccessfully) to stop Texas from using its statewide test to determine high-school graduation. Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League, wants to halt all high-stakes testing until "school systems have introduced all of the ingredients for quality education."

■

A worthless piece of paper does not impress an employer looking for workers who can read, write, and calculate.

■

In the absence of standards over many decades, however, those "ingredients" were never introduced. Disadvantaged students have never gotten the education they need. Kati Haycock heads the Education Trust, a Washington, D.C., organization devoted to promoting academic achievement among blacks, Hispanics, and poor children. "Traditionally, of course, most advocates for such children have shied away from high standards and high stakes," she notes. She is unequivocal, however, in her demand for no-nonsense standards with uncompromising consequences for those who fail to meet them. "Backing off from testing would just kick the problem of low student achievement under the rug again," she says.

Hugh Price wonders why future "deliverymen" and "short-order cooks" need to pass academic tests when they aren't college-bound. But if expectations for both students and teachers are raised, many kids who now seem headed for blue-collar work would acquire the skills that college-level courses and well-paid jobs require. And of course, youngsters do not become less employable (as Orfield suggests) when they fail to receive a meaningless diploma. Denying a student a fake credential does not keep him from getting a job; a worthless piece of paper does not impress an employer looking for workers who can read, write, and calculate.

The opponents of standards and accountability do have some legitimate arguments. It is the rare state that has superb tests like those in Massachusetts. Moreover, the least skilled students may get discouraged and drop out at a higher rate than they do today, economists Julian R. Betts and Robert M. Costrell say in a forthcoming Brookings Institution paper. On the other hand, by tenth grade, those at the bottom are already virtual dropouts. Their scores reflect poor attendance at school, Massachusetts data indicate. And anecdotal evidence suggests that even when they come, they are hardly present. They wander in and out of classes, pay little attention to instruction, and do no homework.

The disconnected are among the many students who need much better schooling at an earlier age. A lucky few are getting it in first-rate schools like the KIPP Academies in New York and Houston, recently showcased at the Republican national convention. All the students at KIPP's South Bronx school are from very poor black or Hispanic families. As the school's literature acknowledges, "Illiteracy, drug abuse, broken homes, gangs, and juvenile crime" are rampant in the neighborhood in which these youngsters live. But KIPP has the highest reading and math scores of any middle school in the Bronx. KIPP's secret is a combination of inspired leadership and dedicated staff, a demanding curriculum, a strict behavioral code, long days—and continuous testing. "The more you test, the better students do," says David Levin, KIPP's director. "Regardless of what teaching style you use, there has to be a constant assessment in place that demonstrates real mastery of what you are teaching."

David Grissmer and three of his colleagues recently analyzed NAEP data for the RAND Corporation and found that "well-designed standards linked to

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assessments and some forms of accountability may change the incentives and productivity within public schools." This suggestion squares with much anecdotal information in Massachusetts: Kim Marshall, for example, is a fine principal in an inner-city elementary school in Boston. His students did poorly on the statewide tests, and he mobilized the school to respond. "We had a curriculum and test we could focus on," he says. Many districts across the state have responded to the new pressure by running summer programs for both students and teachers, placing new emphasis on intervention in the early grades, adding more reading and writing to the curriculum, and making other essential changes.

But will such efforts suffice? It's unlikely. More sweeping change is needed. Only a minority of public-school teachers, Public Agenda reports, have changed their teaching as a result of new state demands. That's not surprising, given the poor quality of leadership that principals often provide, and the general resistance to change. In addition, in too many schools, principals don't control their budgets, and have limited say over whom they hire. The market does not determine salaries. The school day and year are both too short, an astonishing amount of time is wasted, and homework is seldom assigned. Schools need the gifted graduates of the nation's best colleges, but the requirements for certification are often mind-numbing, and the work conditions a disaster. Rude and disorderly behavior is rampant, and the rewards for doing a bang-up job nonexistent. In fact, idealistic young teachers who give their all to their students frequently find themselves resented and isolated, they report.

Schools like KIPP are the face of success. But without further radical change, how many schools will come to look like KIPP in the foreseeable future? We're taking the right steps, but many more are needed. Time is short. The window of opportunity will quickly close if our urban students don't make impressive gains—if the racial gap in academic achievement doesn't narrow significantly. Either we move fast, or failing kids and public alarm will kill the long-overdue drive for rigorous standards and real accountability. **NR**

Choice's Tough Road

The obstacles to reform

JOHN J. MILLER

At an event in Carthage, Tenn., on August 9, Al Gore spoke the words that must have made his handlers shudder: "If I was the parent of a child who went to an inner-city school that was failing, I might be for vouchers, too." Unfortunately for the school-choice movement, Gore was able to send his kids to private schools—so he still opposes vouchers. But he's obviously feeling peer pressure in the presidential race: Both George W. Bush and Dick Cheney are school-choice supporters, as is Gore's running mate, Joe Lieberman (despite his furious back-pedaling in recent weeks).

There's probably never been a better moment than now for riding the school-choice bandwagon. Public-opinion surveys over the last decade show the idea steadily gaining strength. Colin Powell, the most popular man in America, made it a centerpiece of his GOP convention speech. "What are we afraid of?" he shouted, to a roaring crowd. (Maybe he should be Bush's secretary of education.) And in June, the Supreme Court ruled that the government can buy books, computers, and other equipment for religious schools without breaching the church-state wall; it was the sixth decision in a row from the justices allowing public money to go to religious schools.

For all these reasons, school-choice activists are more confident than ever before. They're proud of the progress they made in the 1990s, and believe their movement is on the verge of total victory. But dark days lie ahead, or at least one dark day: November 7. Voters in California and Michigan will face ballot questions on large school-choice programs, and neither appears likely to pass. The one in Michigan has a chance, but its cousin in California is foundering. This has left otherwise optimistic backers feeling glum about the short term. "I wish there were no initiatives on the ballot this year," says Clint Bolick of the Institute for Justice. "A pair of defeats, including a potentially catastrophic loss in California, creates the impression that people oppose this, and that's not helpful."

But if Bush wins, school-choicers may in fact have something important to celebrate on Election Day. In the first few months of his administration, he'd probably sign a bill that President Clinton has vetoed: school choice for low-income kids in Washington, D.C. He'd also push a national school-choice plan that would award $1,500 to parents of some of the kids trapped in America's worst schools. And he'd appoint judges with friendly views. The stakes are high: Despite the Supreme Court's recent encouraging signals, in June only three of Clarence Thomas's fellow justices joined him in a powerful endorsement of school choice. Through Supreme Court appointments, the next president could tip the balance on school choice, one way or the other, for at least a generation.

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One of the chief reasons school choice hasn't seen more success is that its natural supporters haven't wanted to push for it.

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The Court will probably hand down a landmark decision within the next year or two. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals is about to rule on a school-choice program in Cleveland that provides $2,500 education vouchers to the parents of some 3,800 kids. No matter what the decision, it will almost certainly be appealed—and there's a chance the Supreme Court will take the case for the term beginning this October. At the very latest, it seems, the justices will hear it in the term that starts in 2001.

That high-court ruling, when it comes, will either open wide the doors to school choice, or slam them shut for years. One of the chief reasons school

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choice hasn't seen more success is that its natural supporters haven't wanted to push for it—because the courts have not sent a clear signal on its constitutionality. Governors and state lawmakers interested in school choice have been reluctant to spend political capital and provoke potent adversaries over something the courts might snatch away.

That's one of the arguments Michigan governor John Engler has advanced against the initiative in his state. Last year, Engler surprised many of his allies by announcing his opposition to what is now called Proposal 1. His reasoning was largely political: Early polls didn't show the initiative to be wildly popular, and he worried it would inflict a double defeat on conservatives by losing in its own right and simultaneously dragging down GOP prospects in a swing state. The National Education Association is assessing its 2.5 million members an extra $5 fee for the purpose of defeating school choice in California and Michigan; a lot of that money will go toward revving up Democratic turnout. Engler was also concerned about what the Supreme Court might ultimately say on school choice: "They'll set out a map on this soon," he told me in an interview last January. He has a point: A statewide school-choice program is the top achievement of Florida governor Jeb Bush's administration, but it's currently tangled up in a legal fight.

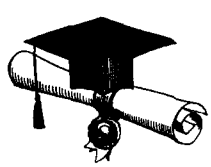
Apart from the Engler flap, school-choice activists in Michigan have done just about everything right. They'll have enough money to wage a real campaign. Co-chairman Dick DeVos anticipates spending $5 million to pass the measure—about half of what the teacher unions predict they may spend, but a significant sum nonetheless. There's also genuine support for the initiative among blacks, thanks to years of grassroots contact by activists. The Catholic Church is behind it, too, having pitched in $765,000 so far, and more is on the way. Michigan's seven bishops have urged priests throughout the state to speak in favor of the initiative during their homilies, and have mailed letters to their flocks. If Proposal 1 fails, it won't be due to a lack of money or poor preparation—it will have lost fair and square, in the marketplace of ideas.

Michigan's approach also embodies the school-choice movement's latest thinking about how to win politically. It doesn't offer private-school tuition aid to every child in the state. Instead, it promises vouchers worth up to $3,100—half of Michigan's per-student public-school expenditures—to kids in districts with less than a two-thirds graduation rate. Surveys show that parents are generally satisfied with the public schools their own kids attend; the education crisis, they believe, affects other people's children. This attitude is especially true among suburban voters. So instead of uprooting the way a whole state goes about educating its kids, the Michigan initiative identifies specific problem areas and works to fix them. That's the strategy Jeb Bush used with success in Florida; means testing is also a key element of the country's two other large school-choice programs, in Cleveland and Milwaukee, as well as the George W. Bush agenda.

CALIFORNIA: WINNING BY LOSING?

California's Proposition 38 rejects this tack. It's much more ambitious, offering a voucher worth about $4,000 to every child in the state, even those currently enrolled in private school, no matter what their parents' income. This is pure Milton Friedman, but also, perhaps, a case of the perfect being the enemy of the good. Proposition 38's hopes already look dim; an August poll by the Public Policy Institute of California gave it the slimmest of leads, 45 percent to 44 percent. Such a lousy showing three months before balloting typically is fatal for initiatives, whose popularity tends to erode as the election nears. What's more, Proposition 38 has alienated people who ought to form its core constituency. John E. Coons and Stephen D. Sugarman, professors of law at the University of California at Berkeley and pioneering liberal supporters of school choice, branded it "morally wrong" because it doesn't target poor families. It's also showing the same weaknesses that doomed its similarly sweeping predecessor, Proposition 174, in 1993: Non-Hispanic whites tend to oppose it, as do

NATIONAL REVIEW's Top Schools



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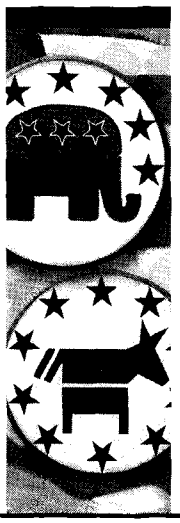

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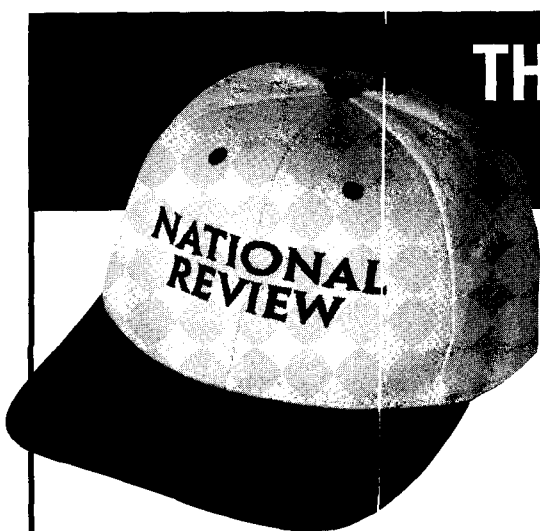
voters with higher incomes. The opposition, meanwhile, is repeating the strategy it mounted seven years ago: questioning the proposal's impact on the state budget, suggesting it will deflate property values dependent on current school-district boundary lines, and warning Christian schools about the dangers of accepting Caesar's money.

At least Proposition 38 will have real financial muscle behind it. Its author, Tim Draper—a Silicon Valley venture capitalist best known for an early investment in Hotmail—has pledged to pour $20 million into the campaign. That may not be enough, but at least the teacher unions won't outspend Draper by a factor of ten, as they were able to do against Proposition 174 (which lost by a two-to-one margin). The bad news for school-choice supporters, however, is that the measure may get drubbed anyway—and this time they won't be able to explain the loss by pointing to their puny bank account. Also, if Republicans have a worse-than-expected year in California races, some party leaders might blame school choice for poisoning the well—and guarantee that it's another seven years, at least, before such a proposal rears its head again in the state.

At the same time, a defeat in California may be a blessing. Proposition 38 is very complicated, and some attorneys who favor school choice believe it might be difficult to defend in court. The Cleveland program, on the other hand, is a pretty good vehicle for a Supreme Court test; Sandra Day O'Connor, the apparent swing justice, may find it acceptable. Further, a *narrow* loss in California might scare the teacher unions into accepting meaningful reforms, such as expanded charter schools.

No matter what happens in California, though, it will be hard to avoid wondering whether $20 million might have been spent more effectively creating a school-choice demonstration program in East Los Angeles—a good deed in its own right, but also the seedbed of later political successes. School choice works; and once it's up and running, people will wonder what took so long. **NR**



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What to Tell the Children

The battle over sex ed

DANIEL MINDUS

"MAINSTREAM" sex educators tend to view their task as a comprehensive one: They lump almost all subjects in with sex ed, and start the curriculum as early as kindergarten; the younger the kids, after all, the easier they are to influence. Technical skills are imparted early: The average age at which a child is taught to use a condom is 11.8 years.

But those who stock cucumbers, bananas, and wooden penises in elementary schools aren't the only ones hoping to teach children about sex. Abstinence (before marriage) has become the guiding principle of sex education in a growing number of school districts, and many of *its* advocates, too, have embraced the younger-is-better philosophy. They also agree with their looser colleagues that sexuality does not concern sex acts alone: It involves—and therefore must be taught with an eye toward—"the whole child." The result is a district-by-district, state-by-state battle between two camps for the chance to indoctrinate this whole child.

Thanks to the 1996 welfare-reform bill, federal money has been pouring into abstinence-only education. The Republican platform endorses it; George W. Bush backs it; President Clinton, in his usual fashion, has expressed support for it while seeking to undermine it. Abstinence-only curricula omit condom training, of course; but they often include "non-inclusive" lessons such as, "Human babies are best cared for by loving and mature parents."

Mr. Mindus is a senior at Yale and editor of *Free: A Student Publication of Politics and Culture.*

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As a result, mainstream sex educators are feeling a little beleaguered, a little angry. "One in three school districts prohibits or distorts the teaching of contraception," the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) complains—and that was before the federal funds from the welfare-reform bill kicked in. A more recent study concludes that of the 70 percent of schools under a district-wide sex-education policy, 35 percent teach abstinence-only curricula. Meanwhile, 900,000 teens become pregnant every year, and 3 million get a sexually transmitted disease. Sexual innocence means sexual ignorance, according to SIECUS—and ignorance results in numbers like these.

The organization's solution calls for the kind of anti-majoritarianism conservatives fear most: a group of experts who use the power of government to reinvent the culture. Cram kids full of information—the value-free science of sex—and they can be trusted to make sexual decisions all on their own, rationally, using the evaluative and normative criterion of personal comfort. The more explicit the talk gets in school, the more rational students will be in bed, since sex has been demystified. Thus SIECUS's curriculum guidelines—which have been endorsed by, among dozens of other groups, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the United States Conference of Mayors—call for children as young as five to learn that "both boys and girls have body parts that feel good when touched," the names of those body parts, and how they are used during intercourse. Teens are trained in non-coital sexual techniques, under the assumption that foreplay won't live up to its name.

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As the mainstream philosophy supports informed choice, abstinence programs advocate informed not-choice.

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Gay techniques are frequently taught too, in the later years, but SIECUS's guidelines ask even five-year-olds to learn about homosexuality; young children, gay-advocacy groups reason, are less likely than older ones to resist exercises aimed at normalizing homosexuality. Those same messages are justified to teenagers and their parents as necessary to the prevention of suicide and bigoted assault, as well as to the countering of the AIDS threat. Kevin Jennings of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has explained: "We immediately seized upon the opponents' calling card—safety." Thus a "Safe Schools Program" administered by the Massachusetts Department of Education funded a GLSEN training session where students were given a how-to and why-to in various sex acts; they were also told that condoms were optional. The parents who taped this hardly anomalous conference were slapped with a gag order and a lawsuit.

Recognizing the gap between their lesson plans and most parents' sensibilities, mainstream sex educators openly embrace a policy of secrecy. The Centers for Disease Control lauds one program, Becoming a Responsible Teen, that insists students sign a contract of secrecy; if a student talks to his parents about what he has learned in class, he is thrown out of the program. The hope is to establish an intimate, safe environment—like a shrink's office. But the goal of turning every student into a mental-health patient doesn't explain the teacher-training programs that CDC funds. One, in Ohio, stamped all material "Work in Progress—Do Not Distribute," and attendees were told, "What's said in this room, stays in this room." Little wonder SIECUS believes that "sexuality education should only be taught by specially trained teachers." Only the select few can be trusted.

It's no surprise that sex-education technocrats consider parents and other laymen little more than obstacles to be overcome; concerned citizens have even forced changes to CDC curricula. Outraged parents in one California town revolted against lesson plans that asked teachers to match same-sex students in sexual role-playing exercises. Now the text encourages the pairing of Bob and Bill in a scene of sexual tension only indirectly, by assigning unisex names to the characters. Bob and Bill play Lee and Chris.

One CDC-recommended teacher's guide addresses abstinence before marriage by noting, "You could become a hermit." But haughty attitudes and technocratic methods aren't limited to the more sexually liberal: Abstinence programs too can be contemptuous of parental authority. As the mainstream philosophy supports informed choice, abstinence programs advocate informed not-choice. Project Reality, one of the most respected abstinence-only programs, strives to have students "discover for themselves that abstinence until marriage is their best choice." To the great credit of this program, parents receive a copy of its teacher's guide; but that doesn't mean they can guide the teacher. Legislators, school boards, and principals, not parents, decide when the goal of sex education will be abstinence.

"Should sex education be taught in schools?" the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies asks. The group's answer: "The question is no longer *should* sex education be taught, but rather *how* should it be taught." Yet some recalcitrants seem to believe that the question of "should" is still relevant. "Teach them the reproductive stuff in biology, and tackle questions of love in literature and the arts," says Dana Mack, author of *The Assault on Parenthood*. "The works of Tolstoy or Jane Austen—that's sex education with a shelf life." NR

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'Getting the Words Right'

How to teach—and not teach—writing

TRACY LEE SIMMONS

ONCE upon a seminar in the mid 1980s, a cadre of graduate teaching assistants gathered to hear a talk delivered by the author of a textbook designed for courses in freshman English. "This is an exciting time to teach writing," she intoned, "because it's not just about writing anymore." She extended her arms from a billowing smock of clashing colors and balanced an invisible balloon upon her head. "Writing is about self-realization. You have the power to help your students discover their own uniqueness." Mere writing, stringing words together with concision and clarity, suddenly seemed pedestrian. What those TA's could not figure out, though, was how her textbook, damp with its New Age mist of self-discovery, could help to teach anyone how to write anything one might generously call English.

She didn't ride the fringes. She spoke for the New Way. For over the previous 20 years the academic instruction of writing in America had been transformed from an apprenticeship in careful utterance—burdened with grammar and rules of usage and endless red-pencil-marked themes—to a smooth path to an easy grade. *Everybody can do it.* Just open the dikes of the repressed psyche and watch the creative tide flow to the broad, calm waters of mental and emotional health. Our New Age author was right: It isn't just about writing anymore.

Would that it were. Writing well has been a thorny task at all times; the best practitioners of the craft have always borne witness that good writing doesn't come naturally. It's a sweaty, punishing business. And it is a job made no easier by larding on greasy desiderata for self-fulfillment and, a not-always-stated purpose, political awareness. How did anyone fob off the idea, sometime between the Beatles' first LP and disco, that writing one's language simply and accurately isn't enough for one course?

We can see the damage wrought upon us all by "empowerment" learning—namely, not so much that words fail us, but that we fail words, the mindful use of which once supplied a fairly reliable key to one's intelligence and culture. Everywhere, even in formal situations where precise language has been customarily expected, we hear speakers fumbling for the tolerably approximate word. We were taught to *express ourselves*, after all, not to agonize over bourgeois notions of communication. Little do we realize that expression without communication not only fails to express accurately, it also sports a lack of consideration for the listener or reader, whose job is now to guess what is meant. Refusing to take pains with words is bad manners. If careless language isn't exactly uncivilized, it's certainly uncivilizing, for carelessness is contagious.

Our predicament may be even more dire than it appears. Historian Paul Johnson speculated recently that, despite the wizardry of computers and the Human Genome Project, the dollop of intelligence meted out to each one of us may be shrinking. It would be ironic if the Information Age ushered in a new disenfranchising ignorance.

Fortunately, teachers of writing needn't bother themselves over such doom-spotting. In fact, they oughtn't. We've had philosophers and psychologists aplenty holding forth in the writing academy. What we need now are folks who can teach the *craft of prose*, which is a much simpler matter than the theorists would have us believe. Learning to write well involves learning rules and usages; it entails heavy reading in models of clarity and grandeur; it requires practice. An interviewer once asked Hemingway what exactly he was doing during his long, sticky hours of revision. "Getting the words right," he replied. That's the word from a pro: Writing is about making sure both that you know what the words signify and that they work together to say what you mean. It's about getting your words right.

Hard work makes superior writing achievable; tenacity counts for more than talent. The good news is that people exist who can do the teaching required to bring it about. The bad news is that they're rarely to be found teaching writing courses in schools, colleges, and universities.

COMMUNICATION: BACK TO BASICS

Aside from attacking the endemic causes of bad writing and expression in the vital years of childhood—loss of rich reading habits, abdication of schools from teaching the proper use of language, unwillingness of parents to correct their children's verbal gaffes, TV—there remain a few things we can do to improve the quality of our writing. We must begin the trek with stout doses of clear thinking.

Good writing can be taught only *prescriptively*: It begins with rights and wrongs. It feeds on precept. This is obvious enough in the realm of grammar: Martin Luther King Jr. didn't say "I *has* a dream" for a reason. Then there's that vast sea called "usage," fraught with principles and precedents galore, needing delicate navigation and a deft finger on the tiller. (May we split infinitives? May we end sentences with prepositions?) *Communication* should be the watchword. The object isn't merely to get your thought out, but to get it out where it can be understood: in the minds of other people. Grammar and usage together, not self-expression, should be the lodestar for the writing course.

Here the wolves begin to howl. Language changes, the linguists bark. Do we apply Shakespeare's rules and principles—or Regis Philbin's? This misses the point. Those of us who use the English language for professional purposes—and therefore have a stake in its health—must reserve the right to assert that even while English evolves, it also devolves. It can be diminished by the loss of useful distinctions. *Imply* and *infer*, for example, differ in meaning, and ought to; to conflate them, as some authorities now sanction, is to degrade both. Usage does change, but only a trained mind can judge whether a change be good or not. If the habit of

Mr. Simmons is director of the Dow journalism program at Hillsdale College.

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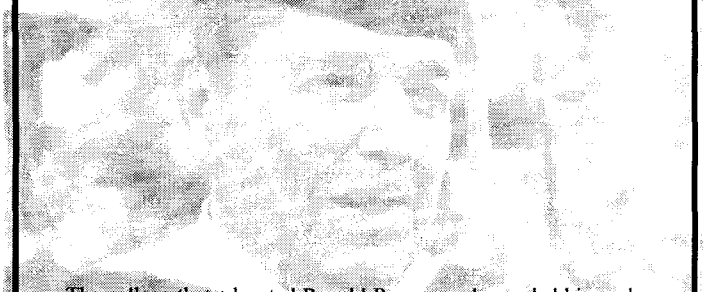

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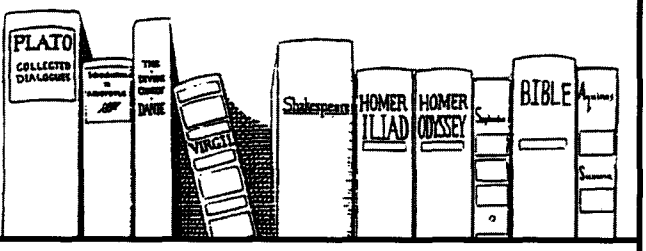

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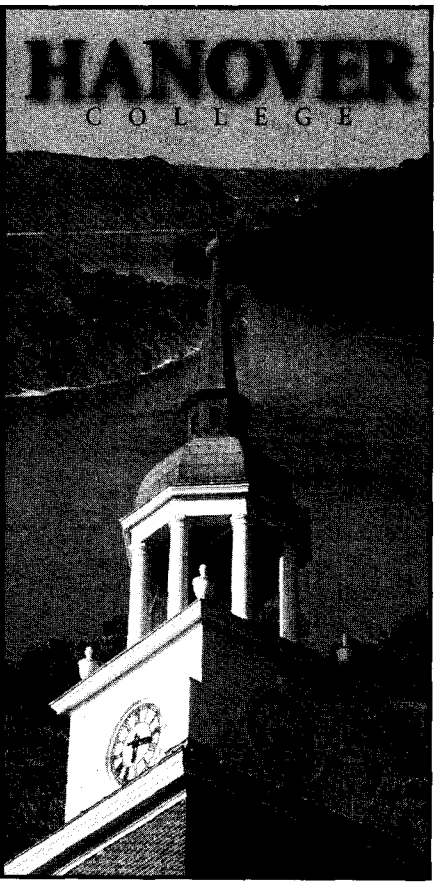

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making such judgments isn't fostered in the writing class, it may never form.

So we follow those rules and principles exemplified by the best, because most brilliant and conscientious, users of the language. Period. We should not allow every trite, cliché-ridden excrescence of talk-show hosts to guide educated usage. The herd mind tramples us wherever we go; it needn't invade the sanctuary of the classroom. We must regain the courage to discriminate between the smart and the stupid, the clear and the clumsy, word or phrase.

Then comes that elusive thing called style, tricky to define, and perhaps impossible to teach. Evelyn Waugh once identified the three elements of style as lucidity, elegance, and individuality. Lucidity, using words clearly and simply, marks the first step towards developing a style, and it's enough for all literate purposes. Elegance comes only to the persistent. Individuality, though, is the topper; according to Waugh, that's what makes your elegantly lucid language different from the next guy's—and in it grow the seeds of literary merit. Tellingly, in our age of free expression, only the third counts. We want our students' work to be "individual." Correctness and clarity, though, must come first. Without the virtue of elegance, one's writing may not be pleasing. But without that of lucidity, it won't even be comprehensible.

TAKE BACK THE WRITING CLASSES

Once we've brought about this return to linguistic sanity, much else will fall into place; accurate maps do wonders for the lost. Here are a few compass bearings for the journey.

Start at the first square. Words and sentences must once again form the building blocks of instruction on the lower rungs of schooling. Students should be immersed in words. We should find them flipping through dictionaries and thesauruses with abandon. They should be made to read exhaustively, and be guided to books composed with a correct and crisp use of language—regardless of political, social, or ethnic content. (*Heather Has Two Mommies* may not provide the best possible artifact of clean prose.) Teachers must insist that children never use words they can't define. Practice with grammar should be unrelenting. No drudgery, no learning.

College students must be instilled with a respect for the sentence as the basic logical unit of thought and expression. Essay writing is architectural; sentence writing is horticultural. Stay with the fundamentals as long as needed. Don't always look at the forest; in botany, it's the trees and plants that matter. Institute tutorials. If courses in English composition must revert to a year of chalky grammatical and syntactical drills, so be it. Writing courses should be as easy to flunk as trigonometry.

■

The herd mind tramples us wherever we go; it needn't invade the sanctuary of the classroom.

■

Relax the death grip of English departments. English professors tend by nature to be engrossed in literature and ideas; many deem it beneath their dignity to ape the schoolmarm. What's more, many not so much teach literature as play the pied piper for a sandal-shod, flannel-clad way of life, spurring students to explore their feelings and respond intelligently to the world around them: no small things perhaps, but leagues away from troubling over misplaced modifiers. Reading and brooding over *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* or *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* will not alone bestow the skill to write.

The teaching of many English professors is encrusted with a miasmic jargon bespeaking a state of mind that, combined with a vague or strident nihilism, renders them singularly ill-suited to the task of teaching the right and graceful use of words. Some have even bought the tripe of charlatans that grammar cannot be taught, only absorbed. The sad fact is that most Ph.D.'s in English are no longer—how to put it gently?—masters of the English language, and are therefore unqualified as a group to instruct the young in its use. Relegate them to surveys, seminars, and arcane research.

All of which leaves us in a pretty place. If writing courses are no longer to rest in English departments, where will they reside? Who will do the teaching?

One modest proposal would be to hand over courses in English composition to *willing* professors and instructors of foreign languages. Enrollments are down in the more difficult tongues like German and Russian, and financially strapped departments may soon find themselves extinct. This is a shame, for those who teach foreign languages are, as a rule, among the most acutely intelligent and patient to be found in any institution. They understand the quiddities of verbal communication; grammar and usage already punch their tickets. They would have not only the endurance for grammatical instruction where needed, but also perhaps the flair for teaching stylish diction and syntax, at least as much flair as that possessed by anyone who has deconstructed *Finnegans Wake*.

Finally, we must not create a new orthodoxy, which will only invite the meddlesome. Leave witch-hunting to self-important academics with little to do but skirmish over paltry inches of arid turf. Keep instruction flexible but grindingly serious. While learning to write well can be satisfying, it isn't fun. Don't tell anyone it is.

Writing courses need, in short, to be about writing again. If we are to rise out of our creeping sub-literacy, this ancient task must be entrusted to a corps of the able and committed. Finding these folks will be a chore, but we can follow a few signposts. Paper credentials need to be pitched. Go for ability, not certification. We should break our reliance on graduate degrees altogether; a proper B.A. should suffice. The chief criterion must be that these men and women have *literary* minds. They should relish the quest for the right word and the sturdy essay. They should read much and selectively. Most of all, they must be armed with a faith in the power of language to communicate what the author intends—and resigned to the tedium required for helping others to flex their muscles to achieve precision and poise of utterance.

One more thing: This brigade should constitute the highest-paid band on campus. That will make it about writing again overnight. **NR**

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BETHESDA MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC
CONFIDENTIAL PATIENTS' EVALUATION
"Relationship Therapy"

PATIENTS: Albert G. & Joseph L.

First Session:

Clients seemed slightly uncomfortable together. AG keeps trying to "high five" JL, but JL seems reluctant to make the gesture.

They spoke briefly about the whirlwind nature of their relationship—and the perils of a "mixed ticket," as AG calls it. Both seemed willing to "do what it takes to keep this thing together."

Session ended early when JL realized that he hadn't finished recanting his previous position on Social Security. AG beamed supportively. "Don't you just love this guy?" he asked.

Second Session:

JL appeared upset—he feels that AG doesn't "acknowledge" his feelings enough. "It was hard to face Maxine Waters," he said, "and I guess what I'd like is a little bit of credit." AG responded that he thought he WAS giving JL credit. JL replied that if that's what AG thinks "being nice" is, then maybe "this whole thing is a mistake."

Therapist tried to get JL and AG to realize that they both, in a way, are saying the same thing. Kowtowing to the black Democrats is a new experience for JL, yet to AG it's almost second nature. To AG, appearing servile to Maxine Waters et al. is "no big deal." Yet to JL, who has built a "reputation based on the appearance of the presence of deep thinking," a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus could be very stressful. It's important to both of them that the meeting go well; yet when one complains about it, the other interprets those complaints as unwillingness to "do what it takes to win." JL very upset. "I wasn't saying I didn't want to do it," he sobbed. "I just wanted a little . . . understanding."

Therapist also tried to get both to realize that any mixed relationship will have its communication problems. They both need to realize that two very different cultures are coming together in this union. AG must learn that words, to JL, matter: The rabbinical tradition of hairsplitting and fine distinctions is deeply ingrained. Likewise, JL must learn that a white southern Democrat has enormously complex "father issues" to contend with, thus leading to an all-consuming desire to win and a love of weight training, neither of which is particularly present in the Jewish tradition.

Therapist tried to get both to see that it is precisely these differences that have created such a powerful emotional attraction. For what makes JL so attractive to AG are the very things that make him such a frustrating figure: his ability to say two things at once, his willingness to make powerful and empty speeches, his reputation for vocal yet meaningless probity. And what makes AG so attractive to JL is his willingness to have JL on the ticket.

Memo to self: Thoughts on a book, along the lines of "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus": "Gentiles Are from Saturn, Jews Are from Pluto."

Third Session:

Upbeat, affectionate, positive communication. JL and AG fresh off the river steamboat, relaxed and happy. The "polls are up," according to AG, which instantly makes JL upset. "It's all polls to you?" he asks. "That's what this whole thing is about? Zogby?"

AG throws up hands in resignation. "What do you want me to say?" he shouts. "It's like everything I say is wrong."

"I'm just worried," JL replied. "What if we don't win? Then what? Then I'll be the one with all the mixed-up positions. My career will be over."

AG burst out: "You're so pessimistic and negative!"

"Code words! Code words!" shouted JL. "Say it! Say it!" he shouted.

"Say what?" AG replied.

"Say what you want to say. Call me a worrying Jew! Go ahead! That's what you're thinking, isn't it?"

Therapist ends the session with a five-minute meditation period and a 15-minute reflective writing exercise.

Final Thoughts:

JL needs to see his relationship with AG on its own terms, and not simply as "something that's good for the Jews, whether I win or not." That attitude is hurtful to AG, who has placed a great deal of self-worth in his ability to win.

AG needs to be more sensitive to JL's "independence" and "free-thinking" and not try to "solve everything" all the time. Given time and space, JL will eventually settle on a position that's compatible with AG. In his words, JL is "willing to be re-educated" but doesn't appreciate "being re-educated on Maxine Waters's timetable."

Weekly sessions necessary.

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The Democrats were unwise enough to hold their convention in the hometown of our caricaturist, Roman Genn (self-depicted above chasing the donkey). Here is his diary.

It takes two to bust one. Sean Biener of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals showed up in his pig costume to dump a load of manure—manure that was later "donated" to the city of Los Angeles.

"I'm going to fight for you!" said Al Gore. What politician ever promised to fight against you?

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Tom Hayden, pointing to the protesters around him, said, "These are the leaders of tomorrow"—a scary thought.

A lady delegate catching up on her reading. I could have done an entire portfolio on convention hats alone.

When I saw the LAPD on horseback swinging their sticks, I thought of Grandpa Genn back in Russia and his stories about the Cossacks.

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Prince Charmless

RICHARD LOWRY

The Prince of Tennessee: The Rise of Al Gore, by David Maraniss and Ellen Nakashima (Simon & Schuster, 323 pp., $23)

WHAT should one feel looking at that famous picture of Richard Nixon walking alone on the beach in his wingtips? Or when one reads about how, as a young man, he used to drive his beloved Pat to her dates with other suitors? Pity? Or contempt? So much about Nixon seems to inspire feelings that alternate between those two poles. In this limited sense, Al Gore is the most Nixonian of contemporary politicians.

In his new biography of Gore, David Maraniss recounts the experience of the old Washington hand Harry McPherson, who was charged in 1992 with helping vet veep possibilities for Clinton. Talking to Gore's colleagues in Congress, McPherson was struck that no one had strong feelings about him. Tennessee senator Jim Sasser, a longtime Gore family friend, described him as "okay." When McPherson met Gore he asked him about his friends: "Gore stumbled and paused trying to answer the question. 'It confirmed my suspicions,' McPherson told his compatriots later, exaggerating slightly to make his point. 'Damn, the guy has no friends!'" Pity or contempt?

This book started as a series of newspaper articles (in Maraniss and his co-author Ellen Nakashima's *Washington Post*), and unfortunately ended as a series of newspaper articles. The chapters never quite gel into a compelling portrayal of Gore, and much of the book is a twice- or thrice-told tale, already recounted in Bill Turque's *Inventing Al Gore* or Bob Zelnick's *Gore: A Political Life*. But there are plenty of interesting details (the first word Gore's grandfather taught him to spell, oddly enough, was "green"). And Gore, as others have noted, is not so much dull as weird.

Indeed, the problem with *The Prince of Tennessee* is that Maraniss hasn't taken care to come to terms with Gore—not a criticism one would make of a book about a boring hack. Maraniss never quite pulls the trigger. His interpretations are almost always equivocations, or excuses. For instance, he offers the item about Gore having no friends, then writes: "If that impression was bewildering, it was by no means disqualifying [for his selection as Clinton's running mate]." There is a constant sense of depths going unplumbed in this book, of newspaper reporters on deadline rushing past telling patterns and details they don't have either the time or the imagination to explore.

Gore's relationship with his father, for instance, is a Gail Sheehy book waiting to happen. During the Los Angeles convention, Gore's parents were featured prominently, because their story is really about that most American of qualities: aspiration. His dad, Albert Sr., taught in a *one-room schoolhouse*. He earned his law degree at *night school*. He met his wife over *the counter at a diner* where she worked as a waitress. Traveling the 60 miles between work and law school, he spent hours a day in that symbol of American mobility—upward and otherwise—*the automobile* (later, he collected used cars, always selecting them based on their backseats, where he would spend his time being driven as a senator).

Gore Sr. worked and burnished his aspiration until it was something shiny and hard, a desperate ambition he passed on to his son (see "Spawn," Aug. 14). This is one of the key differences between Gore Jr. and Bill Clinton. Gore's career is really an act of filial piety. Clinton, by contrast, is of uncertain paternity and was faced with an alcoholic stepfather (Maraniss covers it all in his well-received Clinton biography, *First in His Class*). It isn't just that Gore is a less charmed politician than Clinton—Gore threw up before his first-ever campaign speech, something it's impossible to imagine Clinton doing—but that he's driven by a quality barely in Clinton's vocabulary: a sense of duty.

Gore is dutiful to the point of monomania. Maraniss recounts how when Gore was captain of his faltering football team at the high-powered Washington, D.C., prep school St. Alban's, he visited his coach at home on a Saturday morning to tell on his teammates who were drinking and smoking. "The hard right over the easy wrong." Gore lived by that St. Alban's mantra then, and the line appeared in his acceptance speech in Los Angeles. Maraniss plausibly argues that it was a kind of duty that drove Gore into the muck of the Clinton fundraising scandals: "If he was given a call sheet, he would make every call. Clinton would fake it, slough it off,

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- Courses in pornography in which students view XXX-rated movies are featured at Berkeley (*U.S. News*' #1 public university) and Wesleyan (*U.S. News*' # 10 liberal arts college).

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avoid the task, but the loyal Gore would come through."

Gore always seems to be straining to prove something, to measure up, to satisfy a demand coming from somewhere off stage. When he was considering whether to run for president in 1988, according to Maraniss, he would tell colleagues, "Daddy really wants me to do this." When he decided it was a go, Gore demanded to hold a press conference *that very day*. There is an odd impetuousness that runs through his big political decisions. After desultory turns at divinity and law schools, working as an editorialist at the Nashville *Tennessean*, Gore got a call from the paper's editor one day telling him that a congressional seat had just come open and urging him to run. He decided to run on the spot, immediately dropping to the floor for a preparatory set of push-ups.

Gore may have told himself he wanted to resist the pull of political ambition. That's certainly what he told Tipper, who was led to believe that he wanted to live in a cabin and write. But Gore never appeared to be serious about resisting the gravitational force of his dad, of the grasping and climbing and clawing. Once he started climbing, he did it with deliberation and care—every hair in place for his congressional oversight hearings, every community in Tennessee covered with one of his town meetings—with an eye to attaining the heights his dad just missed in 1956 when Adlai Stevenson passed him over as a running mate.

Maraniss quotes a memo from Gore's 1988 campaign that puts him in a procession of political giants: "TR—04 FDR—32 JFK—60 AGJ—88." Then, what they all have in common: "Great presidents. Harvard grads. Prep schools. Political families, controversial fathers. Aggressive foreign/domestic policies." The memo hints at Gore's occasional grandiosity, verging on delusion, which again belies his dull reputation. One of the more bizarre instances of this trait is his claim—since withdrawn—that he helped Hubert Humphrey write his 1968 convention acceptance speech. A newspaper reporter talked to Gore the day before the speech, and since some of the ideas in Humphrey's address turned out to be similar to his own—i.e., that it was "the end of an era"—the 20-year-old Gore concluded that the reporter must have been sent on a secret mission to get his advice for the Democratic nominee.

What is Maraniss's take on this rather stunning example of narcissism? "There is in Al Gore an occasional propensity to enhance his role in events. The 1968 convention episode might fall into that category of solipsism. But the uncontested facts in that scene . . . accurately reflect his political disposition that summer and all through what was to follow during his tumultuous senior year at Harvard." Oh, okay.

Richard Ellis/NEWSMAKERS

Al Gore on Meet the Press, *October, 13, 1996*

Gore's arrogance is wedded—perhaps not surprisingly—to a gnawing self-doubt (a biographer with a more literary bent might remark on the connections between the dutiful, hesitant prince of Tennessee and the prince of Denmark). Maraniss calls the nervous question, asked repeatedly of staff and colleagues, "How am I doing?" the "private mantra of his political career." Dick Morris wanted Gore to headline the third night of the Democratic convention in 1996, but Gore resisted until Morris told him the president wanted him to do it:

> Gore gave a "heavy sigh," as Morris recalled the scene. Morris started talking about what he might say in the speech. Gore was not listening. He got up from his normal seat and walked across the room and sat in a chair near the American flag. He murmured something . . . *What if I . . .*
>
> Morris could not hear it all.
>
> *Excuse me, sir?*
>
> Gore raised his voice only slightly.
>
> "What if I f*** up?" he muttered.

Pity or contempt? Maraniss refuses to say. As telling as anything he writes in *The Prince of Tennessee* is a brief passage quoting author Richard Ben Cramer, who isn't as chary of making judgments. Cramer met Gore to see if the candidate would be worth including in his now-classic study of the 1988 campaign and its characters, *What It Takes*. He tried to probe beneath the usual horse-race and policy questions—to ask, How did you decide to run? What did Tipper think?—but got only determined boilerplate from Gore (there is little indication that Maraniss got anything better in his six interviews, none exceeding an hour, with Gore).

Cramer immediately marked Gore off his list of interesting and candid candidates, sniffing out how the slightly borrowed ambition—*Daddy wants me to do it*—combined with the insecurity—*Will I f*** it up?*—forced Gore to run scared, to avoid any honest account of his motives and feelings:

> I thought to myself, life's too short to talk to this guy anymore. It wasn't the fact that he wasn't telling me the truth, it was the pallid bankruptcy of the lies, all in service of a picture of himself that wasn't even interesting. He wasn't even an interesting liar. That really was the kiss of death for me. His lies were in service of the smallest common denominator correctness.

None of this need keep Gore from the White House. As his dad demonstrated, the hoary cliché about brains and a willingness to work being the keys to success in America is true. Gore is prodigiously endowed with both. And, of course, there is precedent for a politician winning the presidency on intelligence and sheer will, despite his inner demons and off-putting personality. Nixon managed it. Twice. **NR**

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They'll Never Learn

CAROL IANNONE

Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms, by Diane Ravitch (Simon & Schuster, 555 pp., $30)

IN Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, the execrable pedophile Humbert Humbert visits the school his stepdaughter is to attend and learns of its educational philosophy: "We are not so much concerned . . . with having our students become bookworms," the headmistress lectures him authoritatively, "or be able to reel off all the capitals of Europe which nobody knows anyway, or learn by heart the dates of forgotten battles. What we are concerned with is the adjustment of the child to group life. This is why we stress the four D's: Dramatics, Dance, Debating, and Dating."

If you thought such outlandish pedagogical notions could only be the product of satirical fantasy, you will find Diane Ravitch's invaluable new book, *Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*, most enlightening. Ravitch is the distinguished educationist who helped ignite the debate about declining school standards while serving in the Department of Education during the Bush administration. In her new book she documents the history of the progressive movement in American education that began in the 1890s and continues in the present, as well as the noble battle fought against it throughout the century by stalwart traditionalists. She presents her story mainly by sketching out the various arguments of the principal figures on both sides, but also provides cogent commentary and analysis. We thereby learn how awfully close to the mark Nabokov's satire was.

The progressives' major purpose was to drain the curriculum of academic content (language and literature, science and mathematics, history, the arts, and foreign languages) in favor of a roster of practical courses supposedly designed to equip the student for adulthood, centered on things like health, home, family, community, consumerism, personal development, and, yes, even group living, dating, and choosing a mate. If you ever looked at recent furors over condom distribution and "self-esteem" and wondered how on earth the schools had gotten involved in such things to begin with, this is the reason.

The progressives were self-described social engineers, and their overall objective was to use the schools to shape the social order. John Dewey—the godfather of progressive ed—and his many followers disdained subject matter and focused instead on the process of learning, emphasizing the child's own interests, experiences, activities, and adjustment to society. Many progressives were also elitists, as the word is pejoratively used nowadays; it is they who felt that only college-bound students should receive academic preparation, while the rest should be tracked into commercial and vocational curricula.

Thanks to opposition from tradition-minded parents and teachers and from traditional educationists and intellectuals (including Robert Maynard Hutchins, Howard Mumford Jones, and unsung heroes such as Isaac L. Kandel) who wanted an academic program for all students, the progressives did not succeed in banishing academic content completely. At times, it seems, textbooks had practically to be pried out of the cold, dead hands of educators determined to continue with their subject matter in violation of the new dictates being advanced by various educational commissions.

But over time the progressives succeeded in injecting a lot of low-level, extra-academic fluff into the curriculum, especially in the nonacademic tracks; in diluting solid book-learning in favor of learning based on experience, activity, entertainment, and students' (often self-professed) "needs"; in condemning many young people to narrow vocationalism; and in seriously diminishing the ability of public schools to provide a good basic education in an orderly and disciplined environment, especially to the poor black children who needed it most. Furthermore, as the century advanced, there were fewer and fewer teachers sufficiently trained in the older models to be able to resist.

Things got much worse when, atop this rampant anti-intellectualism, the Sixties inflicted its "liberationist, pseudorevolutionary consciousness," its demand for "open education" focused on creativity and spontaneity, and its denigration of authority and morality. Schools lost the residual discipline and rigor that had persisted despite the progressive movement, and became disordered, dangerous, and dirty.

■

The progressives were self-described social engineers, and their overall objective was to use the schools to shape the social order.

■

By the 1980s, the decline of required core curricula and the proliferation of electives on the secondary level meant a diminished education for just about everyone. One extensive study revealed that in the average school, students had only three hours each day of instructional time, the rest being devoted to nonacademic activities. Course credit was given for cheerleading, student government, yearbook, and "mass media." In California the only statewide requirement for high-school graduation was two years of physical education, and students were taking such subjects as homemaking, restaurant management, "food for singles," and "exploring childhood."

Since the publication of the landmark study *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, there has been some improvement, but the battle remains decidedly uphill. "Whole language" reading instruction continues despite a consensus that phonics instruction is needed in the early stages of the reading process. Efforts to establish standards for various subjects have faltered against the hard core of progressivism that remains, the rise of recent intellectual developments such as postmodernism, deconstruction, and

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relativism, and the proliferation of anti-Western and anti-American attitudes among the education elites.

Towards the end of the book, Ravitch diplomatically grants the progressives some due, but from much of her discussion it would seem that America's children would have been better off if the progressives had been given their own island in the remote Pacific. At different times they argued not only against subject matter, but against homework, tests, grades, and any kind of instruction whatsoever. The dreadful John Dewey, whose ideas, like those of Karl Marx, were supposedly always being misunderstood or misapplied, believed that the importance of reading would decline in the technological age and recommended postponing reading instruction until age eight. John Holt, author of the influential book *How Children Fail* (1964), wrote that children should learn only what they want to know, as much or as little. The few contributions the progressives did make, like the use of movable desks and field trips or the creation of more cheerful classrooms, do not seem worth the price. (Indeed, the toy-like, cartoonish nature of school supplies available today, as well as the distressingly informal dress of most schoolchildren, leads one to believe that classrooms have become entirely too cheerful.) But Ravitch wisely cautions against polarizing the debate between progressives and traditionalists. Instead she counsels taking the best from both, dropping the extraneous social-engineering projects the schools have taken on, and getting down to the business of ensuring that "nearly all . . . pupils gain literacy and numeracy, as well as a good understanding of history and the sciences, literature, and a foreign language." She insists also that schools must spurn value-free relativism and "teach children the importance of honesty, personal responsibility, intellectual curiosity, industry, kindness, empathy, and courage."

Ravitch cautions against polarizing the debate between progressives and traditionalists.

Ravitch's overall recommendations are excellent, but some questions arise. She argues, for example, that an academic curriculum should be provided to all students. Is vocational and commercial training such a bad idea, however, as long as it is voluntary and embedded in a program that includes solid academic courses? Similarly, Ravitch rightly disdains IQ testing that condemns a child to a substandard education, though she does accept "ability grouping," arguing that such grouping need only affect the "pace" of instruction, not the "quality." But surely at some point the slower pace would have to affect qualitative achievement.

Likewise, Ravitch refrains from endorsing old-fashioned methods like recitation and memorization, but perhaps a measure of the dreaded "rote learning" might actually pack more into the regular school day and offer balance to the freer forms of instruction currently in use.

A final point concerns multiculturalism. Ravitch disdains ethnic-particularist models like Afrocentrism, but favors cultural-pluralist models in which students learn about many cultures. Ravitch certainly earned her stripes a decade ago in her battle with the Afro-centrists (in which she was branded a "sophisticated Texas Jew" by the infamous Leonard Jeffries). But it may be time to recognize that the "good" forms of multiculturalism have become the moderate front by which "bad" multiculturalism with its underlying political agenda have taken over our schools. Even the pluralist model is used to promote the idea that all cultures are equal and that our own culture is of no special historical importance.

But such questions are only testimony to Diane Ravitch's continuing importance to the education debates. Her artful recounting of the history and consequences of the reform movement in America's schools adds incalculably to our understanding of the present state of education, and is a contribution that only a scholar of Ravitch's stature could have made. **NR**

Making Waves

ROGER KAPLAN

Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, by Arch Puddington (Kentucky, 416 pp., $27.50)

LECH WALESA, the trade-union leader who helped Poland escape from Communism and became its first democratically elected president, credited Radio Free Europe with inspiring his commitment to political activism. Listening at age 13 to the Munich-based Radio during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, Walesa, like millions of others in Poland, came to regard RFE as the legitimate voice of the anti-Communist opposition. As Walesa put it many years later: "Presenting works that were on the 'red censorship list,' it was our ministry of culture. Exposing absurd economic policies, it was our ministry of economics. Reacting to events promptly and pertinently, but above all truthfully, it was our ministry of information."

Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were, with the Voice of America, the main instruments of American "public diplomacy" in the fight against totalitarianism. They expressed the very American belief that in a competition of information, the truth is capable of beating lies. But the "freedom Radios" went beyond VOA's commitment to broadcasting news and a rich sampling of American culture. RFE and RL (which was directed at the Soviet Union itself) deliberately aimed to persuade listeners in Soviet-controlled areas that they were not forgotten by the U.S. or by exiled anti-Communist leaders. The Radios were therefore fighting a war of ideas as well as disseminating news. As Walesa noted, both were sorely needed.

When George Kennan, known as

Mr. Kaplan is the Washington editor of *Géopolitiques Africaines* and is editing a book on the media's coverage of human-rights issues.

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"A Veritable Treasure House."

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ince young Buckley took Yale to task almost 50 years ago, he has been taking the English language out for invigorating romps. As a result, his collected speeches are a high-spirited tour through the great controversies that have shaped both politics and culture. If you doubt that, or wonder why it is that Bill Buckley is the most consequential journalist and most skillful controversialist of our time, this delightful volume is for you. It is also for any reader who relishes wit in the service of moral convictions.

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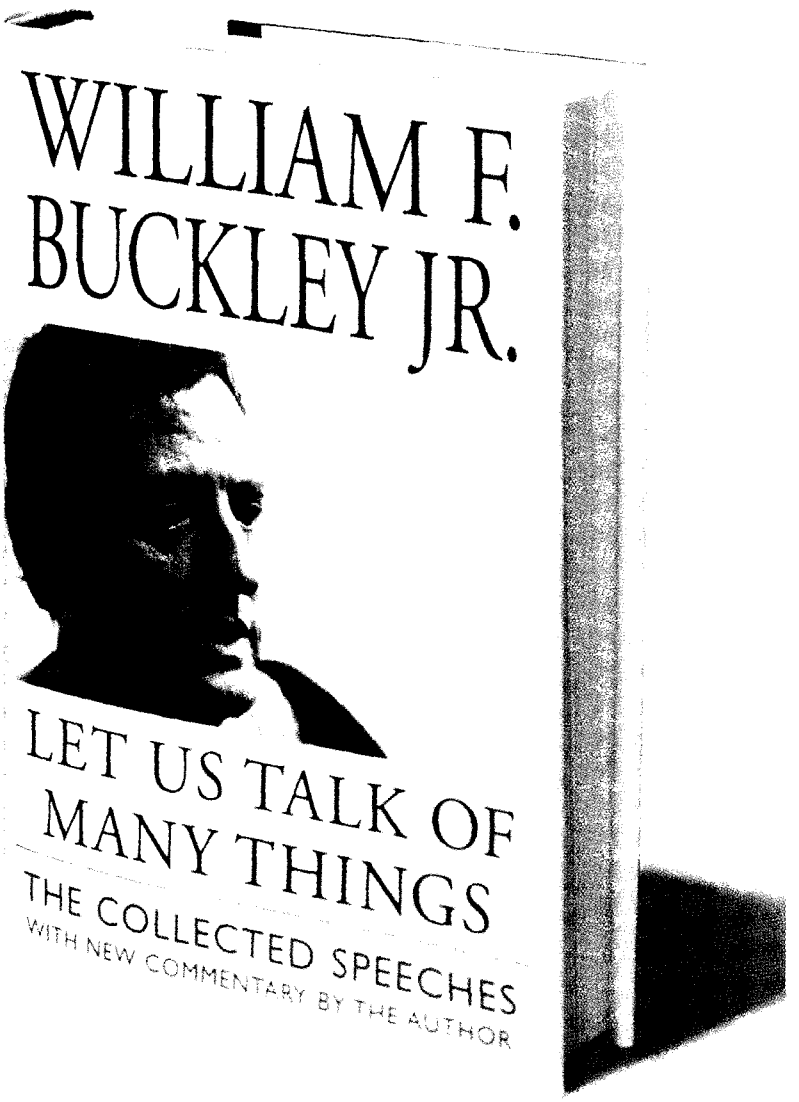

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"the father of the Radios," developed his containment doctrine, he took it as a given that the Stalinist empire, if prevented from further expansion, would collapse under the weight of its own moral, political, and economic failures. The first policy guidance for RFE, written in September 1950, noted that the Radio's purpose was to "undermine Soviet and native Communist influence . . . by every means available as propaganda."

As Arch Puddington points out in his new history of the freedom Radios, no one took this pejoratively, with the possible exception of the "Soviet and native Communists" who spent millions trying (sometimes successfully) to jam the broadcasts. Propaganda was acceptable to the Radios' audiences precisely because its information was credible. It did not matter to Walesa and millions of others that the U.S. government was paying for their news—the news was verifiably accurate. It did not matter to a Russian intellectual that it was thanks to American government funds that he could hear a program of readings from officially banned books—the readings were plainly authentic.

Censorship in those times was relatively easy to enforce. Without the Internet, faxes, high-technology phones, and the rest, a determined regime could keep information out of most people's reach. Listeners might give more or less credibility to information provided by a government—American or otherwise—but in countries where their own governments blocked access to knowledge in all its forms, the source of intellectual and spiritual nourishment was not a major concern. The glory of the Radios, as Puddington shows, was that they managed to combine the functions of reporting and propaganda without losing credibility.

This kind of successful balance is probably only possible when sponsored by a democracy, and in particular by the United States. Any government based on the interests of a despotic, unelected group is, almost of necessity, led to bend the news to suit its needs. This was, of course, taken to an extreme in the Soviet system, which is precisely why credible information was such a treasure to Walesa and others, and why its effect over the years was so subversive. Even in a free society information is bent out of shape in a million ways by government spin-men, private PR firms, advertisers, and the rest—but truthful information emerges in the great whirl of competition and critical reaction.

The Radios managed to combine the functions of reporting and propaganda without losing credibility.

I had a brief experience as a government spin-man when I wrote policy-position spots for broadcast by the VOA. In their prudence regarding American intentions or capabilities, these broadcasts were definable as "propaganda." You could not, for example, say anything mean about Foday Sankoh when the mass-murderer was part of a U.S.–brokered deal in Sierra Leone. While this was clearly propaganda, it did not undermine listeners' confidence in the news they received on the same frequency. The reason was simple: At VOA, a firewall separated the editorial and news functions—control of the former was in the hands of foreign-service officers, not broadcast professionals. In the case of RFE and RL, the line was sometimes blurred, yet credibility was not damaged. This, as Puddington makes clear, was due to the seriousness,

■ SHELF LIFE ■

THE humanities are not just for the professoriate: This is the perspective of two impressive new books by prominent intellectuals.

Literary critic Harold Bloom's 1998 book *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* helped create something of a Shakespeare moment in the mass culture. His new book, *How to Read and Why* (Scribner, 283 pp., $25), builds on that surprising popular success by trying to explain, to a broad audience, what literature is trying to do. While Bloom often returns to Shakespeare, his subject here is the entire spectrum of Western imaginative literature.

The book offers excellent advice on a general level. For example, Bloom urges us "not to refuse the pleasures of identification with favorite characters, any more than the authors have been able to resist such pleasures." (One of my favorite writers, Vladimir Nabokov, discouraged this particular indulgence.) But the book can be read most profitably as a series of short introductions to key novels, plays, and poems. Bloom provides pithy, memorable distillations of his lifetime of study: *Crime and Punishment* is "dreadfully powerful but somewhat pernicious, almost as though it were a *Macbeth* composed by Macbeth himself"; "Kafka and Borges do not give you dirges for the unlived life."

Fifty years ago, Mortimer Adler was working on a similar project of popularizing high culture, the Britannica series of Great Books of the Western World. His new book, *How to Think About the Great Ideas* (Open Court, 530 pp., $24.95), is an artifact of that era: a transcription of 52 television shows he did in 1953–54. Adler's approach was controversial at the time, condemned by some as middlebrow—but the new book demonstrates the value, indeed the necessity, of Adler's project.

He begins with the insight that philosophical thought is an activity to which all people have a proclivity, and that the words denoting the Great Ideas are not the jargon of a specialized science but the words of everyday speech. His task is to take words such as truth, beauty, justice, and love, and deepen his audience's understanding of them without recourse to a technical vocabulary. That he succeeds in this, for over 500 pages, is a tribute both to his devotion and to the possibilities of popularization.

I also strongly recommend Adler's *How to Read a Book* (Simon & Schuster, 426 pp., $14), written with Charles Van Doren, and Bloom's *The Western Canon* (Riverhead, 546 pp., $15) as excellent companions to reading one's way through our cultural patrimony.

—MICHAEL POTEMRA

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professionalism, and dedication of the Radios' staffs at all levels. The only truly catastrophic lapse came during the Hungarian revolution of 1956, when RFE commentaries and analyses gave listeners reason to believe that material help from outside Hungary was on its way.

Though the Hungarian case was exceptional and never repeated (Poles knew they could get reliable information on the Solidarity trade-union movement by tuning in to RFE, but the broadcasts did not exhort them to join the union), the tension between "news and views" was integral to the Radios' history. Puddington chronicles the pressures—external and internal—exerted on the Radios over the years. From the American Right came demands that they be more stridently anti-Communist; from the Left, or isolationists like Sen. J. William Fulbright, came complaints that they represented inordinate fears (of Communism) that interfered with the pursuit of peace. Fulbright wrote of RFE in 1972, "Purporting to show [East Europeans] that there is a better 'way of life' outside the 'Iron Curtain,' we foster futile discontent, not for any discernable purpose of policy, but for the purposes of ideological mischief." It is possible that Fulbright, a segregationist, did not see how terribly different the Soviet despotism was from that of Arkansas.

Fulbright was not alone in considering the Radios an unwarranted interference in other country's affairs. Yet when Fulbright proposed the dismantling of the Radios, he had practically no support. The Radios, which operate out of Prague, are now administered by a quasi-governmental agency, the Board for International Broadcasting, which also oversees the Voice of America.

Puddington leaves little doubt that the Radios served an extremely valuable purpose. For 40 years, the Radios were both surrogate local-news services for countries dominated by misinformation and lies, and sources of intellectual, cultural, and spiritual nourishment for people who otherwise would have been bored to despair by stultifying Marxist-Leninist cant. Sponsoring such institutions remains, to this day, one of the best investments a democratic regime can make in its self-preservation. **NR**

Bodies and Souls

MARVIN OLASKY

Blood and Fire: William and Catherine Booth and Their Salvation Army, by Roy Hattersley (Doubleday, 471 pp., $26.95)

GEORGE W. BUSH has made compassionate conservatism, with its emphasis on supporting the antipoverty efforts of churches, synagogues, and mosques, a cornerstone of his campaign. Al Gore also says he's for helping faith-based organizations—as long as they don't take their faith too seriously by engaging in worship and "proselytizing." This significant difference could become a campaign issue unless both candidates decide to gloss it over. It is already a legal sticking point, now that the American Jewish Congress and the Texas Civil Rights Project have jointly sued Bush's Department of Human Services for giving a grant to a faith-based job-training program.

At such a time, the history of the Salvation Army—the biggest fight-poverty-through-evangelism group of the 19th century—has much to teach us: above all, perhaps, that the reduction of poverty Gore wants is inseparable from the proselytizing he fears.

As Roy Hattersley explains in *Blood and Fire*, the Salvation Army grew out of the vision of William Booth, an evangelist born in 1829, just as the social consequences of Britain's industrial boom were becoming apparent. Booth's father was a failed entrepreneur whose early death in 1842 pushed Booth into an apprenticeship with a pawnbroker, where he witnessed up close the desperation of the poor. In 1848, Marx and Engels responded to this growing desperation by writing the *Communist Manifesto*; the same year, Booth became a Methodist street preacher, calling for radical change of a different sort.

Mr. Olasky is a senior fellow of the Acton Institute and the editor of *World*.

Like Marx, Booth was fervent in his denunciation of poverty and its attendant miseries, but he focused on individuals rather than economic structures. He would accost men on the street, asking, "Are you going away from here to the public houses to spend money on drink when your wife needs it for food and your children's shoes?" A few years later Booth himself was scrimping to support a growing family: In 1855, he married Catherine Mumford, the daughter of another preacher. Together they had eight children and some tough years, with many moves and upheavals. (Hattersley's chapter describing Booth's family life is aptly entitled "Suffer Little Children.")

Some of these difficulties arose because Booth's methodology did not please the Methodist leadership. A century earlier, John Wesley had taken Christianity out of church buildings and into the fields, but Booth's attempt to employ the language of the music hall to spiritual ends upset the denominational leaders who controlled his finances, and he decided to go his own way. The organization Booth had founded in 1865 to evangelize among the poor grew gradually over the next 15 years. First called simply "Christian Mission," Booth adopted the name "Salvation Army" in 1878, with workers given uniforms (boosting morale and aiding mutual recognition) and military ranks.

William Booth stressed religious conversion as the way to build Heaven on earth.

Hattersley writes, "William Booth's success was built on single-minded certainty." In his work with the poor, Booth always emphasized personal salvation. Even later, as the Army began a direct battle against poverty, Booth continued to stress religious conversion as the way to build Heaven on earth. "Souls! Souls! Souls!" insisted the movement's magazine *War Cry*. This strategy won Booth his share of enemies, both those who thought he was "blaming the victim" (to use a later phrase) and those with vested interests in the old order. Thus bar

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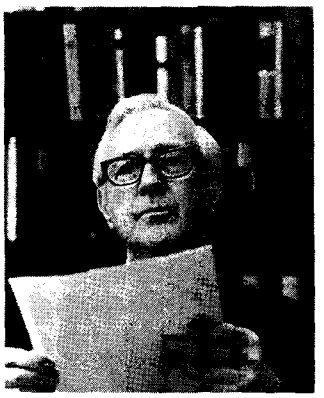

Jacques Barzun

Education and the State

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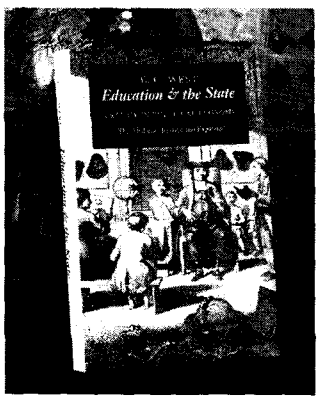

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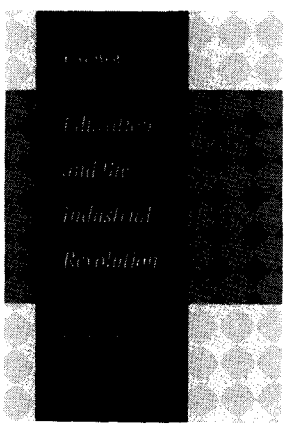

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owners who saw their business diminish when Booth and his colleagues preached outside often hired harassers to tear the Army's tracts into shreds and throw them at the speakers.

After one such episode ended in a messy public brawl, journalistic and political elites branded the Salvationists troublemakers. In 1880, the British home secretary declared that, while not strictly illegal, the Army's processions "provoke antagonism and lead to riotous collisions," and recommended that magistrates "by every means in their power, endeavour to prevent them." Accordingly, police sometimes arrested Booth's preachers on the charge of obstruction. Later, when some members of the House of Commons spoke up for the movement, magistrates began providing protection and more people volunteered.

Hattersley stresses Booth's willingness to offend in a righteous cause. He had little inhibition—at one point insisting that Cecil Rhodes kneel down with him to pray in a crowded railway car. The Army also triumphed because of (and despite) the unofficial leadership of Catherine Booth, his partner for 35 years—a scandal to some because of biblical teaching about male spiritual leadership. Another mixed blessing was the Army's "holiness teaching"—that God's redemption was instantly available to all who could be brought to repent of their sins. Many were called, but few were so dramatically transformed. Some gave up in disappointment and returned to their old ways.

By 1890, the year Catherine died, the Army was recruiting thousands of members each year around the world. Soon it gained a presence not only in every English-speaking country, but in France, Germany, and even as far away as Java. The Army had set up its first American outpost in 1880, and by 1900 it had 700 corps and outposts in the U.S., with 2,600 officers or employees and 20,000 volunteers. The Army in the U.S. sponsored 141 social-relief institutions and set up industrial depots and wood-yards in some of the most destitute urban areas. Officers made sure the able-bodied homeless went to work: The Army's employment bureaus placed about 4,800 persons per month.

Booth traveled great distances throughout Europe and North America to publicize this work. In 1904, at the age of 75, he traveled 1,200 miles by automobile in the course of a month and addressed 164 meetings. The next year he covered 2,250 meetings and spoke in 121 towns, and did much the same the following three years. When he died in 1912, family members he had trained took over the Army's leadership.

Though Hattersley ends with Booth's death, the Salvation Army made major advances during World War I, when its aid to soldiers near the front made "Sally" workers as welcome a sight as the Red Cross—maybe more, because its emphasis was still on "souls" and there were few atheists in foxholes. Most Salvation Army outposts have retained that religious commitment, and many of its officials still emphasize, like Booth, the personal causes of poverty. But in recent years some of the chapters have been largely secularized and turned into government look-alikes.

It is interesting to contemplate the challenges that a modern Booth would face. "Onward, Christian Soldiers" is no longer a popular hymn, and the idea of a Christian "army" seems threatening in an era that exalts individual choice. If government provided any help to Booth's organization today, even something as minor as extra police protection, lawsuits could ensue. The charge against the Texas Department of Human Services is that it made an $8,000 annual grant to a job-training program that used biblical references "to teach subjects such as self-identification, relationships, authority, attitude, integrity, communication, conflict resolution, stewardship of time/money, and excellence in all things."

There is no indication that the program failed to teach such things, which would appear to be useful in helping people out of poverty. But to the Great Society Left, it appears that results don't matter, only that faith-based groups be kept in their place, at the margin of public affairs. In light of Hattersley's account, it seems fair to ask: Is it just coincidence that the most effective poverty-fighting movement in English and American history was one in which the cry of "Souls!" resounded? **NR**

■ FILM ■

Still the Right Stuff

JOHN SIMON

ONE approaches a movie like ***Space Cowboys*** with some trepidation. The world saved from nuclear holocaust by four old codgers, former maverick Army test pilots, and now the only ones who can go into space on a most delicate and precarious mission? Next thing we'll have Godzilla stoppable only by the combined efforts of Mickey Mouse, Felix the Cat, and Tom and Jerry. But far-fetched as *Space Cowboys* may be and steeped as it is in technological lore—which sounds especially arcane when barked out in outer space—this film is great fun even if your technology does not extend beyond the screwdriver and the pre-halogen light bulb.

■

Clint Eastwood has the courage to switch genres the way others change shirts.

■

Frank and Tank and Hawk and Jerry were known as Team Daedalus back in 1958, a fearless foursome of test pilots ready to fly into outer space when NASA replaced the Air Force in the space program and, to the team's utter humiliation, a chimpanzee became first in space. Now the Russian satellite *Ikon* is in trouble, drifting toward earth and, as it turns out, illegally equipped with six nuclear warheads. It is too cumbersome for retrieval, and the only one who can redirect it is the D'Artagnan of our four musketeers, Frank Corvin (Clint Eastwood). He had designed the guidance system of the early *Skylab* satellite, which the Russians managed to steal for *Ikon*. But this system is by now so antiquated that no one at NASA can master it in the time remaining. Why nobody

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OPEN FORUM

How We Judge a Fallen Hero

By Ethan Nadelmann

DARRYL STRAWBERRY seems to have a hard time just saying no to cocaine.

For the third time in 10 years, Strawberry has entered a treatment center to deal with his addiction to the drug, and he has been suspended from baseball for a year for failing his drug test.

My first thought on hearing this news was: What's the matter with him? Can't he just say no, if only for the few more years that his knees hold out? He sure must like cocaine a lot.

My second thought was: Gee, Strawberry sure is lucky he's rich and famous, and that all sorts of people like George Steinbrenner care about him, because if he were poor and not famous, odds are that he'd be sitting behind bars right now, probably for violating probation or parole with a dirty urine sample. This country is full of people whose only offense is an inability to say no to cocaine. Some go to fancy rehabs, some sort it out at home, and the unlucky ones get to think it over in jail or prison.

My third thought was: Strawberry's addicted. He's got a disease, or a disability. This is not a case of moral weakness but of metabolic dysfunction. We don't punish folks for their diseases, or disabilities. If anything, we try to make accommodations for their disabilities so long as they don't pose direct threats to others. If we really believe that drug addiction is a disease, then there is no ethical or medical justification for depriving him of his livelihood for manifesting a symptom of the disease. Moreover, why in this case do we always blame the patient? Maybe the fault lies with the treatment provider.

My fourth thought was: Damn hypocrites! Strawberry can't seem to say no to cocaine, but who isn't addicted to one thing or another? Think about cigarettes. How many people have quit, and quit again, and again, and again? Some really do quit, but they still cheat every once in a while. Can't relate to cigarettes? Think about coffee. Imagine abstaining from that wonderful drug day after day after day, even on those mornings when nothing in the world would seem more pleasurable than a delicious hot cup of coffee. Can't relate to that one? Then think about

dieting, and about saying no to bread day after day after day. Who doesn't cheat? Who isn't addicted to something? Sure, cocaine is different. But what's most different about cocaine is not the nature of the experience, or the behavior associated with it, but the fact that it is illegal and the others aren't.

My fifth thought was: What exactly is the point of the punishment? Almost everything we've learned about drug use and addiction is that a good job and a supportive environment are crucial in enabling people to say no to drugs, or at least to keep their drug use under control. Strawberry's job as a major league ballplayer, responsible to his fans, teammates and employer, provided powerful incentives for him to keep his cocaine use under control. He may have slipped up in the off season, but no one doubts this man's courage and fortitude. So what is the point of suspending him from baseball? Is the punishment supposed to be a form of treatment? Or the treatment a form of punishment? Or can we no longer tell the difference?

My sixth thought was: Why don't they leave the guy alone? No one's suggested that Darryl's cocaine use gave him an unfair advantage over his competitors. And no one's claimed his drug use posed a threat to others on the ballfield. Indeed, no one's even charged he was impaired at the workplace. Seems to me Darryl's cocaine use was none of anyone else's business --apart from the laws and policies and contracts that make this private behavior supposedly everyone's business.

My seventh thought was: Perhaps professional baseball, and all professional sports, would be better off without any drug testing --except perhaps for performance enhancing substances. What's the point? Few employees work in more public workplaces. If they are impaired, people will notice, and managers will deal with it, quickly. If they're not impaired, and don't pose a threat to others, who cares if they're using one drug or another.

"But they're role models for young people," some say. If that's true, then why does the system insist on broadcasting their vices and frailties? It's hard enough living the life of a hero, constantly in the public eye, without having your urine tested and your results announced to the world. If we're running short on heros these days, maybe it's because we no longer respect their privacy, and their humanity, enough to let them be heros.

I'll tell you when Darryl Strawberry became my hero. I'm a Yankee fan, not a Mets fan, so it wasn't until quite recently: Oct. 17, 1999, to be exact, Game 4 of the American League Championship Series, at Boston's Fenway Park. According to The New York Times' Buster Olney: "When Strawberry came to bat for the first time, the Fenway Park fans offered a new and different chorus for the slugger with the history of drugs and alcohol --Just Say No.' Boston's Bret Saberhagen threw a high fastball and Strawberry rattled a high drive two-thirds of the way up the right field foul pole for a home run. It was the last time the hearty singers serenaded Strawberry on this evening."

It reminded me of another hero of mine who wasn't good at just saying no, Babe Ruth. He, too, broke the prohibition laws of the day with alacrity --but no one ever thought to test his urine. Good thing for him. Good thing for us.

Ethan A. Nadelmann is director of the Lindesmith Center (www.lindesmith.org), a drug policy institute with offices in New York and San Francisco.

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from Russia can is a bit of a mystery.

So Frank is hauled out of retirement by Bob Gerson (James Cromwell), the former commanding general and nemesis of the Daedalus four, who now wants him to teach some young astronauts to fix *Ikon*. It would take too much time, and Frank extorts from Gerson the reconvening of Team Daedalus for a flight they have been dreaming of for 40-odd years. But they have to prove themselves mentally and physically as fit as the youngsters, which generates a slew of comic incidents.

So does the continuing sniping between Frank and Gerson, now even crustier after the encrustation of four decades. But even if they prove fit, Team Daedalus will be accompanied by two young backup astronauts. These two, alas, are clichés: Evan (Loren Dean), the hothead and troublemaker, and Roger (Courtney B. Vance), the obligatory cool black. To complicate matters, NASA now has for a flight director the cynical Eugene Davis (William Devane) in charge of astronaut training and making life miserable for the old boys. To sweeten things a bit, the director for the *Ikon* mission is Sara Holland (Marcia Gay Harden), an understatedly sexy young woman, who falls in love with the widowed Hawk and he with her, even though the ladies' man is Jerry (Donald Sutherland).

The beauty of this is that it somehow transcends character stereotypes and plot clichés by artful dialogue, superior acting, apt direction, and fine cinematography. It proves that there is life in the venerable archetypes yet: the old soldiers who never die (though one of them does here); the junior officers locked in a tough-talking contest with their superiors; the new-Army types versus the old-Army types; the devoted buddies who go through hell together, razzing to the end; the star- (or space-) crossed romance; the soldier-versus-civilian fisticuffs; and the rest of the habitual stuff that, in the right hands, can be the right stuff yet again.

You've got to hand it to Clint Eastwood: He has developed not only into a powerful actor but also into a strong director, and he has the courage to switch genres the way others change shirts. So there's lots of comedy here regarding what the musketeers have turned into in private life—especially Tank, the backwoods preacher—and in how the old guys dredge up or fake the physical prowess required of them. Tommy Lee Jones is laconically virile as the chief daredevil Hawk, Sutherland leers with bonhomie as the still lecherous Jerry, and James Garner's paunch only makes him more personable as Tank.

■

Polly Draper has a spontaneous loveliness that more conventionally pretty actresses might envy.

■

James Cromwell's Gerson is drier than zwieback. William Devane's Eugene sneers grandly, Marcia Gay Harden neatly balances staunchness and tenderness, and the two "youngsters," Dean and Vance, are good foils for the veterans. The writing team, Ken Kaufman and Howard Klausner—the former newish, the latter a first-timer—do as well by tricky science as by tangy humor; Jack N. Green, Eastwood's longtime cameraman, is as vivid in space as he is vital on earth.

Although NASA gave the film full support, and access to both the Johnson and Kennedy space centers, I suspect that the superb old art director/production designer Henry Bumstead contributed more than a little to the authenticity. Add a sensibly unemphatic score by Lennie Niehaus and expert visual effects by Industrial Light and Magic, and you have a crew every bit as splendid as Team Daedalus.

■ I would like to report that the modest but deserving independent film ***The Tic Code*** is in its small-scale way as good as *Space Cowboys*. A better-than-average illness movie, more smart than sentimental, it is nevertheless not quite up to examining in sufficient depth and detail the troublesome and humiliating Tourette's syndrome and those it affects directly or indirectly.

The actress Polly Draper, who wrote and stars in the movie, is married to a jazzman, Michael Wolff, who has Tourette's syndrome. This is an incurable neurological disorder characterized by various facial tics and body twitches, compulsive need for touching and symmetrical ordering, frequently accompanied by grunts and, in extreme cases, the urge for loud obscenity in public places. Wolff's affliction is mild, but Draper and all involved in the film did extensive research on Tourette's and studied children in Tourette's schools.

Draper plays Laura, a tailor and single mother of a 12-year-old Tourette's sufferer, Miles, who is an ardent jazz fan and already an accomplished jazz pianist. Both have a secret crush on Tyrone, a stellar black sax player who also has Tourette's, and by and by become involved with him. Miles gets to play duets with his idol, and Laura, abandoned by a husband who couldn't take the boy's illness, becomes Tyrone's lover.

There are many hurdles, of which the racial difference is the least. Tyrone's pride and unwillingness to discuss his ailment makes him storm out when he mistakenly believes Laura's interest in him to have been mostly clinical. Miles becomes so upset he runs away from home. He has problems also with his teacher, with a bullying fellow student, and with his father, whom he avoids even more than the father does him. At times, he also resents his overprotective mother.

Draper's writing is lively, blessedly unmawkish, and with a good command of the jazz lingo; though it lacks ultimate incisiveness, style, and inspiration. The various New York locations are well chosen, though Wolfgang Held's cinematography is not outstanding. There is, however, Wolff's riveting jazz score, with rhythms that sometimes parallel the tics of Tourette's. Gary Winick has directed cogently and tactfully, and there are savvy performances by Gregory Hines as Tyrone and by several supporting actors.

But the triumphs are Christopher George Marquette's and Polly Draper's acting. With natural ease, the 12-year-old manages expert tics, canny handling of the keyboard, good control of several accents, and all-around likeableness. Miss Draper is the rare totally unactressy performer with a spontaneous loveliness that more conventionally pretty actresses might envy. And she exudes an irresistible femininity that makes her love scenes as ingenuously heart-stabbing as they are stirringly sensual. **NR**

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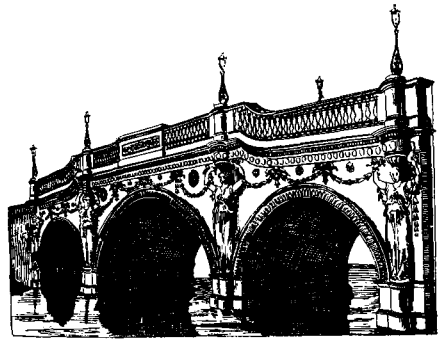
■ MANNERS ■

Candida's Camera

ANDREW STUTTAFORD

WHEN actress Candida Royalle (*Legends of Porn, Classic Swedish Erotica 2, Teenage Pony Girls*) announces that she is "going to be hard on you," you sit up and pay attention. Not that we needed the warning. We had all paid good money ($49) to see her perform, and we were sure she would not let us down. Nor does she. True to her name, Candida is open, frank, and often very revealing. Miss Royalle knows how to give a good lecture.

Yes, lecture. To the crowd gathered in an upstairs room in Manhattan's "School for the Physical City," Candida Royalle is much more than a sex star. She is an entrepreneur, sharing her hard-won practical insights with an eager and ambitious audience. The event has been arranged by The Learning Annex, an "alternative adult-education organization" that offers evening classes at a number of cities across the country. The demand for its "powerful, inspirational, nurturing, and insightful" seminars is in the American tradition, a reminder of the relentless drive for self-improvement that took this nation from log cabin to Martha Stewart. Recent courses have included Spanish, calligraphy, running your own laundromat, the power of persuasion, becoming a medical transcriptionist, and "Breaking into Adult Movies—in front of or behind the camera!"



Candida's pupils are ushered into a large, brightly lit classroom painted in the Pokémon palette that only an educational bureaucrat would choose. It's all very normal—*Educating Rita* rather than *Deep Throat*. There's no buzz, no guilty anticipation, just a naughty pile of coarse, er, course materials heaped on a side table: flyers for FOXE ("Fans of X-Rated Entertainment"), an order form for *Breaking into XXX—the Porn Stud Handbook*. And our teacher? Miss Royalle is a trim fortyish blonde in a short skirt, more Mary Kay than Miss Jean Brodie.

This is not enough to hold two members of the class, who slink off within minutes, disappointed perhaps to discover that the evening will not feature "adult situations." Maybe they will be back for the Tantra lessons ("Reach higher levels of sexual ecstasy than ever!"). The only other source of awkwardness is the presence of a film crew shooting the lecture for *National Enquirer*'s TV show. Strangely, not everyone wants to appear in front of these particular cameras.

■

This mainly male crowd doesn't want to get naked. They want to be 'suits,' Sam Goldwyns of smut.

■

These are shy folks, mostly. One woman, an exotic dancer, is interested in making "bubble-bath-type videos" for her fans, but she is an exception. This mainly male crowd doesn't want to get naked. They want to be "suits," Sam Goldwyns of smut. That's wise, for as our lecturer explains, the life of a wannabe porn stud is far from easy. Performing under conditions that would make even Priapus pause (Viagra helps, apparently), men are props, not star attractions. As such they are not likely to make much money. Most people aren't renting adult movies to gape at the guys. So the women are paid more. As even the EEOC might agree, this is not discrimination, it's the marketplace.

Which is really the theme of the evening. Naughty pictures are now a significant American industry. The Nude Economy is for real: By some estimates, annual sales of pornography in the U.S. alone already exceed $10 billion. That's a *Fortune* 500, *Wall Street Journal* kind of number, one that tells us, among other things, that proper management has finally come to this improper trade. And that's where the Learning Annex fits in. As Candida's students earnestly take notes, she briskly runs through the economics of adult video, who gets paid how much to do what to whom, the complexities of copyright, the perils of distribution, and the market in foreign licensing.

It's surprisingly dry stuff, and the ensuing discussion is matter-of-fact. In the United States, business is a serious matter, and while we have come a long way from the Comstock laws, our cheery, upbeat lecturer is subject to an equally demanding set of rules, those of American enterprise. To Candida's obvious delight, it's a tough code and a little austere. And in the way she describes it, with relish and without irony, there's a touch of Cotton Mather, a hint of the old Puritan idea that self-denial is the key to success. The boogie nights are clearly over. The film set should be free of drugs and alcohol and carefully budgeted. The artistic impulse must also be kept firmly under control (only "one-third of the film can be story, with 60 minutes for sex"). There's respect for hard work, suspicion of ripoffs ("Watch everything, watch everyone . . . if it's yours, watch it like a hawk"), and a shrewd appreciation for what counts—the bottom line in every sense.

Unfortunately, these days the bottom line is not enough. Sanctimony has evolved, not died. We live in a time when many businesses, particularly those with a potential image problem, feel they have to go beyond the buck. They like to demonstrate, at least in their advertising, that they have some higher—usually vaguely politically correct—redeeming social purpose. Forestry companies become model environmentalists, brewers natter on about "responsible" drinking, and "the people of Philip Morris" are so busy

Mr. Stuttaford is a frequent contributor to NATIONAL REVIEW.

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sheltering abused women and feeding the hungry it's amazing they have any time for making cigarettes.

Candida Royalle is no exception. A few years ago the former "teenage pony girl" founded Femme Productions to make films that, she says, women too will want to watch. Now she takes herself, well, a little seriously. As her website notes, Candida has "addressed many conferences . . . including the World Congress of Sexology, the Smithsonian Institute, [and] the American Psychiatric Association." Sadly, it's not enough for her films to be dirty, fun, and profitable. In our relentlessly didactic era they must also promote "positive sexual role modeling."

What's that? Well for one thing, something that, as we are clearly

Candida's class includes a dark warning that if George W. is elected, 'we're really in for it.'

expected to know, Republicans oppose. Like most corporate piety, Candida's spiel has a liberal tinge. As some readers may remember ("House of Porn," October 27, 1997), Ms. Royalle is a founding member of Feminists for Free Expression, and presumably someone well able to understand that the principal threat to her business comes from a much larger group, the feminists against free expression and their fellow-travelers in the "progressive" camp. Despite that, her talk is punctuated by moments of leftish political commentary. There's an almost nostalgic swipe at "Reagan/Meese" and a dark warning that if George W. is elected, "we're really in for it."

But her audience doesn't seem worried. This is a Coolidge crowd. Their business is business. They have no more interest in discussing threats to free expression than a moonshiner would have in debating Prohibition. To these aspiring pornographers, the First Amendment is a commercial device, not a human right. They want to concentrate on record-keeping, employee relations, soundtracks, budgets, legal obligations, and the uses of DVD ("save your bloopers"). It's all about the economics of sex. Though far from romantic, it is still a pursuit of another American fantasy, the dream of success. Is it true, asks the exotic dancer, that one porn star makes "as much as $150,000 a year"?

At that, two stockbrokers in the class exchange faintly superior smiles. Still, they understand where she is coming from. NR

■ BOOKS IN BRIEF ■

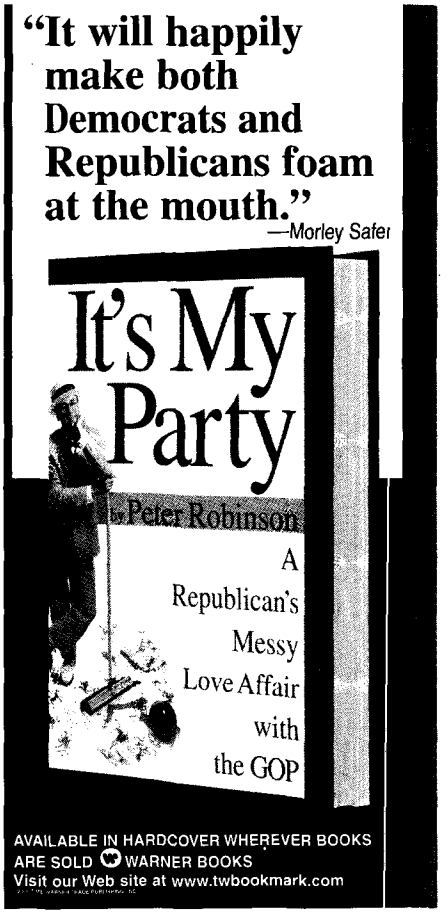
Pursuit & Persuasion, by Sally S. Wright (Multnomah, 356 pp., $10.99)

THIS is the third of Sally Wright's Ben Reese mystery novels, and it lives up to the promise of its predecessors. There is always the danger that a continuing character in a detective series will become a stock figure. This doesn't happen with the great ones, of course. Peter Wimsey and Albert Campion neither grow stale nor remain the same: Each develops from fatuous young lord-about-town to *homme sérieux* in the course of his novels. Even Hercule Poirot, unloved by his creator, grows in human sympathy as he goes along.

Ben Reese is a Mensch to begin with—a hero from the Normandy landing, a widower doing his best not to give in to despair. But our sense of him deepens as we see him reacting to different people—in this novel, the loner who bullies dogs and cats and who takes pleasure in seeing the works of man crumble; the hot-tempered young sculptor whom the murder victim and her late husband had befriended; the elegant old man battling bone-marrow cancer and longing for intelligent conversation; the victim herself, Georgina Fletcher, whom Ben never met in life but whom he must come to know in order to solve her murder.

He is aided in this effort by the poems Georgina left behind. Writing poetry on behalf of a character is always a chancy proposition for the novelist—even Nicholas Blake (who in his other life was the poet C. Day Lewis) didn't attempt it in *Head of a Traveler*—but Sally Wright takes the precaution of having an old friend of Georgina's tell us that "she loved poetry far too much to take her own mediocrities seriously." Rather, her poetry is in effect her diary (though, by the way, as a "verbal contraption," to use Auden's term, much of it is quite good), and it does indeed let both Ben and us into her mind and heart. But this is not a drawing-room novel, and the climactic scene, on a hidden beach overshadowed by the ruins of a Scottish castle, is a masterpiece.

—LINDA BRIDGES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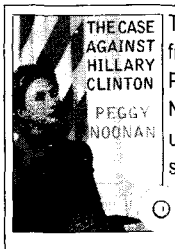

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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Lieberman Kicks Off His Campaign

STAMFORD, CONN., AUGUST 11

THE Democratic campaign featuring the vice-presidential nominee kicked off on Wednesday, a tribal shout of joy for the candidate who, in the words of the *Stamford Advocate*, was "WELCOME HOME." Joseph Lieberman was raised here in Stamford. In such matters speaker Al Gore was fully briefed, giving to the crowd of 1,000 not only the name of the preparatory school Lieberman had attended, but the news that it no longer existed, an intimacy of biographical detail done with such informal fluency as might have passed over the datum that FDR no longer existed.

It was a real home-town rally, and Sen. Lieberman mentioned that he had frequently spoken at the same hall, the Italian Center, welcoming this or that candidate or event. But this time there were nine television cameras documenting everything done and said, including the remarks of 14 ("You are witnessing the longest warm-up act in the history of politics," said Connecticut attorney general Richard Blumenthal) introductory speakers. They included senior U.S. senator Christopher Dodd; the mayor of Stamford, Dan Malloy ("For twelve years, Presidents Reagan and Bush sought to make the rich richer"); and a representative of the AFL-CIO ("George Bush not only should not become the next president, he should be run out of the State of Texas").

The assembly was bursting with pride at the accomplishment of this suburban city, about which a historian a few years ago recorded that the most exciting thing that had ever happened to it was that George Washington had had breakfast here ("Good. But not as good as Greenwich," the Founding Father noted in his journal). The enthusiasm for what Stamford had wrought sometimes got in the way of the narrative being celebrated. At first, it focused on Lieberman's Jewishness ("In Connecticut we had the first Jewish senator—Abe Ribicoff; the first woman governor—Ella Grasso; and now the first vice president!"). Toward the end of the two-hour affair, enthusiasts were entitled to wonder whether the primary reason for naming Joe Lieberman was that he was Jewish, or that he was from Stamford.

One speaker exultantly noted that the nomination of Sen. Lieberman had resulted in a 16-point change in the election polls. Up until Monday, Bush had been rated toweringly advanced over Gore. After Monday, a Quinnipiac poll showed Gore slightly ahead of Bush.

This datum had a confusing effect. If the Gore candidacy so heavily needed Joe Lieberman on the ticket, what was the explanation for it? Vice President Gore spoke beamingly of his choice and of the prospects for the ticket ("We will make history together"), causing some to wonder: Why was Gore so behind in public esteem? He has been eight years as a very conspicuous vice president and yet was trailing badly. Why were his fortunes reversed by naming an obscure senator as vice president?

Because Lieberman is Jewish? Joseph Lieberman is many things, besides being Jewish. He is enormously talented as a human being and as a friend ("There are a thousand people here, each one of them could give you an example of Joe Lieberman's goodness and generosity"—that included this observer). The unwelcome hypothesis was being implicitly urged that the reason Gore/Lieberman would now proceed to win the election was because Joe Lieberman is Jewish. In a calm, tolerant society one wouldn't want a ticket to succeed solely because one of its members was Jewish, Catholic, or black.

On the other hand, at political rallies, distinctions do not capture the tabloid's eye. Instead one revels in the animal political spirits, even as, in capitalist societies, the animal spirit, singled out by Lord Keynes, accounts for much economic activity.

Mr. Gore was in fine shape, his broad smile uninterrupted, his hand, when away from the podium, locked together with Tipper's. When the two candidates and their wives walked onstage, everyone kissed or hugged everyone else, which made one wonder: How many times did Tipper have to kiss Al, in the eight hours they had spent together, beginning with the joint appearance that morning in Carthage, Tennessee?

But mostly they kissed the audience, and the audience kissed them back. "I saw a license plate yesterday that read, 'Illinois, the Home of Abraham Lincoln.' Soon Connecticut license plates will read, 'The Home of Joe Lieberman.'" It may prove a three-month round trip for Mr. Lieberman, Connecticut to Connecticut, but he is always welcome home.

"What about the appearance of wrongdoing?"

Thank You. Thank You Very Much.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 15

A TELEVISION director spoke of the entrance of President Clinton to the stage. "That required very intricate work. You could see there were four alleyways, maybe even five, and he had to turn the corner to go down each one. The camera had to precede him, step by step, alleyway by alleyway, a long, long walk until he debouched onto the stage."

But that's good theater, never mind that it's expensive—Barbra's guests paid $10 million the day before to share an hour with Bill. The Entrance can be a very big deal. Hitler liked it when a German division was to the right of him, a division to the left of him, and he marched between them in silent illumination toward the stage. When Johnny Carson retired, the cameras were prepared to take him from his arrival in his Porsche, through the studio hall, into makeup, to the conference with the producer, and finally to the "Heeeere's Johnny!" moment. And of course at the State of the Union addresses, the presidents walk down the aisle of the House shaking hands to right and to left, everyone standing and applauding. Good stuff, but peanut-gallery compared to the long lonely walk through narrow passageway after passageway, a travel

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shared by the television audience with the 10,000 worshippers. What were the first words he spoke? "Thank you, thank you, thank you." What were the last words Hillary had spoken, moments before? "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

What ensued was, in the words of the headline, a speech "Extolling 8 Years of Change in America." What was not extolled, or even touched upon, was the most striking change of the decade, which was crystallizing public indifference to presidential conduct. This is a very important cultural development, bipartisan in impact. The president did not need to refer, in his valedictory, to the momentous proceedings of the impeachment years, which he got away with. And two weeks earlier, in Philadelphia, the Republicans did not mention what they did or tried to do to register constitutional disapproval of perjury and extra-constitutional big lying ("I never had sexual relations with that woman").

There are always changes, with the passage of eight years, and Mr. Clinton asked the viewers to take his word for it that the reason for the prosperity that took hold in 1993 was his presence at the helm. He did tip his hat to Mr. Greenspan, and well he might have, inasmuch as it was Greenspan's tightening of the credit reins in 1992 that precipitated the heavy drain to Clinton from President Bush. He moved then, as any Hollywood director would have approved, to the single event that gave theatrical measure to Vice President Gore—who cast the deciding vote on the 1993 tax bill, to which Mr. Clinton proceeded to refer as one might to the Magna Carta. The font of economic progress, racial reconciliation, educational advance, and world peace. He shouldn't have thanked us, we should have thanked him.

He has many gifts, the outgoing president. One of them is his quite natural capacity to smile just a little as he talks. This faculty leaves the dew of geniality over the whole of what he does and says. Then there is the slight crack in the voice. For some years, we all worried that it was a laryngitical lesion of some sort, that probably it would get worse unless he held his tongue. But it was manifest that no such reversal of primal energy was possible; and before long, the little rasp became ingratiating, and now one would not be surprised if it transpired that junior politicians are practicing both the smile and the slightly strained voice.

And indispensable to the public impression is the upswept hair. How can anybody, any *thing*, be decrepit when the whole top of the head rises in celebration of perpetual youth and energy? The posture permits him to transcend the groin-and-eyeball idiom of politics he might engage in in different company. Joe Eszterhas, in his book *American Rhapsody*, gives us his version of Hillary on the subject of the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*: "those motherf***ing, racist, Neanderthal, troglodyte, right-wing creeps."

Put that in the blender a few times and you get, arms outstretched, a bid to all America to believe the Clintons. . . . A fine performance.

Did You Listen?

NEW YORK, AUGUST 18

Is it really the case that messianic narcissism is okay by the American people? The Gore experience will test the question. The endless celebration of the candidate's qualities: his virtuousness, his friendliness, his seriousness, his curiosity, his fidelity, his playfulness, his spirituality . . . STOP! We are being carried away! The *torture* is that we have to wait until November to *vote for Al Gore!* Between now and then five million people will starve, six million will go without medical care, seven million will have babies who would otherwise have been aborted, and seven million will not learn how to read. And the majority of all of the above live in Texas. And crime is at the lowest level in 25 years and we'll have 50,000 more policemen. And Joe Lieberman is so outstandingly the best man to serve as vice president, Gore discovered him after a search that took only three months. Anybody else would have used up 15 months—and that would have made it impossible for Lieberman to be vice president because the election would have come and gone. *Don't you see that?* Well, my daughter will explain it to you. Karenna, explain that to them. And who says Spike Jonze is an iconoclast? There is *nothing* iconoclastic in his view of me. Americans have *not* lost their faith. I would *never* permit that.

It cannot be a coincidence that Al Gore looks like Superman. Supermen don't lose elections. Besides which, there is always rank Republican stupidity, in case Providence is sleepy enough to forget to honor the imperatives of the party of justice and goodness. A question: It is mid-afternoon of Day 4 of the Democratic convention. Somebody leaks to the press that yet another grand jury is considering whether to indict Clinton for perjury and obstruction of justice in the Lewinsky affair. That being the equivalent of appointing a commission to investigate the accusations of Sen. McCarthy, you really have to ask: Did the guy who leaked this *really* intend to damage Gore? If so, that partisan is as politically deaf as Mr. Cheney, who on Day 1 minus 2 of the Democratic convention permitted to be released the news that his company would pay him $20 million as a severance bonus.

Why—give the reading public one reason—couldn't the candidate for vice president on the Republican ticket have delayed the publication of that information until November 8? Why didn't he tell the board of directors of Halliburton that yes, he'd be glad to discuss severance arrangements, but he was going to be tied up for twelve weeks?

The ratings as published on Friday tell us that "More Tune In/To Democrats." ABC, NBC, and CBS were watched by a combined audience estimated at 15 million people on Day 3 (the vice-president's night). Joe Lieberman 15, Dick Cheney, 14.1 million. But the general viewing trend is apparently down. When Al Gore accepted the nomination for vice president at the 1996 Democratic convention, he had 16.5 million viewers, a number that dropped 10 percent drop over the ensuing four years.

Could there be a reason for this diminution? Reporters Bernard Weinraub and Elisabeth Bumiller of the *New York Times* might have stumbled on it. They spoke of the introduction to Candidate Gore:

"The tribute was designed to depict Mr. Gore as warm, gutsy and accessible. But it went on and on.

"And on.

"'I didn't hear it,' said Senator Charles Schumer of New York.

"'I didn't hear it,' said Sheldon Silver, the speaker of the New York State Assembly.

"'I didn't really listen to it,' said Christine Quinn, a New York City councilwoman.

"'Sure it's hokey,' said Jaynne Keyes, a former New York City film commissioner. 'But three-fourths of America is hokey, and proud of it.'"

Oh yeah?

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

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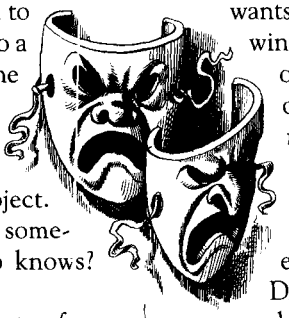
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

AMERICAN punditry has a new literary genre: the "Campaign Diary." Everybody is writing them and it's easy to see why. The format is ideally structured for unstructured thoughts. The lead-ins—Day One, Day Two, etc.—hide the fact that you no longer know or care what day it is, and imply that you are actually on the campaign trail when in fact you are slumped half-drunk in front of the TV wishing you were dead. They also eliminate the need to make everything dovetail into a logical conclusion. When the brackish waters of Fallacy 2000 threaten to swallow you up, just insert a new lead-in and change the subject. Readers will simply think something new happened. Who knows? Maybe it did.



DAY ONE: In the interests of pretending to be a new kind of misanthrope for the next three months, I'll start with the good news. Laura Bush comes along just in time to prevent a complete break in my family's susceptibility to gorgeous brunette First Ladies. My grandmother was wild about Frances Cleveland, my mother was wild about Grace Coolidge, but Jackie Kennedy left me cold. I was just about resigned to letting down the side, but now there's hope.

Laura won my heart with the way she handled the outdoorsy, unintellectual Bushes on one of her first visits to Kennebunkport. As the clan prepared for a vigorous game, someone asked her, "And what do you do?"—i.e., what sport she played. Laura serenely replied, "I read, I smoke, and I admire." Unfortunately, she has since quit smoking, but there's hope on that front too. Living in the White House is stressful, and stress must be relieved. If she starts smoking again and W. starts drinking again, it could spell the end of the Health Nazis.

Fallacy 2000 could be our first First Lady election. With many in both parties wishing their tickets were the other way around, the continuing contrast between the worrisome front-runners and their reassuring running mates might cause millions to end the war of nerves by voting for the wives instead.

It's not impossible. Hillary has traumatized Americans so much that they now ache for a bona fide First Lady more than they realize. Tipper Gore's bubbliness harkens back to irrepressible Dolly Madison, but this is not a good year for blithe spirits. Tipper also has a whiff of Zelda Fitzgerald about her, and America wants normal. Laura Bush would win in a landslide, for all the obvious reasons, plus a subtle one that would deliver a record male vote: She comes across as a woman who can make a man settle down without making his life miserable.

DAY TWO: Nothing beats a week of tributes to compassion interrupted by the AFLAC talking-duck commercial. Two yuppie businessmen are eating lunch on a park bench when behind them a bicyclist falls with a loud crash, followed by a scream. Without so much as a backward glance, one businessman says to the other, "When I had my accident, my supplemental insurance kicked in." Why don't they go see what happened and try to help?

DAY THREE: I could swear that mentor/tutor/volunteer newspaper features increased after Colin Powell's speech. The photo always shows a white soccer mom suffused in a moist glow of self-sacrifice, seated beside a minority kid staring at a Little Golden Book. How long will it be before it's like jury duty? Being a writer always saves me from that, but from tutoring reading?

DAY FOUR: During the New Deal, GOP stabs at compassion were called "Me Too-ism." Now, bolstered by white guilt and obsessed by black votes, Republicans may well become the "Me First" party. Considering their demonstrated eagerness to challenge Democrats to feats of racial one-upmanship, it's only a matter of time before a GOP honcho, probably Bush strategist Karl Rove, wakes up some morning, thinks "Nixon went to China," and calls for slavery reparations.

This has a certain terrible beauty. America's oldest racial entitlement is the post–Civil War reparations scheme dreamed up by the GOP called "Forty Acres and a Mule." Confronted with this first, Democrats will say "Me Too" and call for a national surtax.

Rove has already announced the end of the GOP's "Southern Strategy," dismissing it as an "old paradigm" inimical to the spirit of Fallacy 2000's incessantly lauded "positive agendas." Pat Robertson took umbrage at this, saying, "You have to give people a reason why this party is different from the other party." That goes double for southern Democrats turned Republican, who are like the catechism pupil in *The Cardinal*. Assured by Father Fermoyle that Protestants can go to Heaven too, the boy asks, "Then why do we have to go to all this trouble to be Catholic?"

DAY FIVE: I always sing after three martinis. This time I made a special effort to choose something inclusive.

> *From Britain's shore the English rose,*
> *The shamrock and the heather!*
> *God save the Queen and Heaven bless*
> *The maple leaf forever!*

They left out Welsh-Canadians, but outside of a stew pot there's not much you can do with leeks.

DAY SIX: My eye is swollen and itching. Boric acid didn't help so I used Preparation H and it cleared it right up. Why not? Swelling and itching are swelling and itching. Preparation H didn't discriminate, it didn't say, "Hey, this is an eye, I'm outta here." It's a new kind of Preparation H that reaches out beyond its base to touch every willing agenda.

DAY SEVEN: Earnest pols take the fun out of diversity. I prefer the Jewish southern belle I knew at Ole Miss. Each weekend her mother burst into the dorm with new clothes, crying, "Leah Lee, honey, where you at? Try on this darlin' shmatta!" Then her boyfriend would come down from Memphis and they'd fight. "Murray Lee, Ah'm sick 'n' tard of listenin' to your magilla! You're a nebbish, 'deed you are, just a l'il ole nebbish!" **NR**

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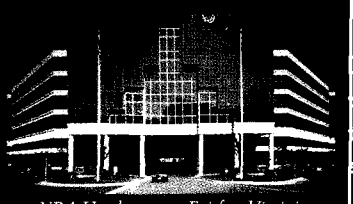

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